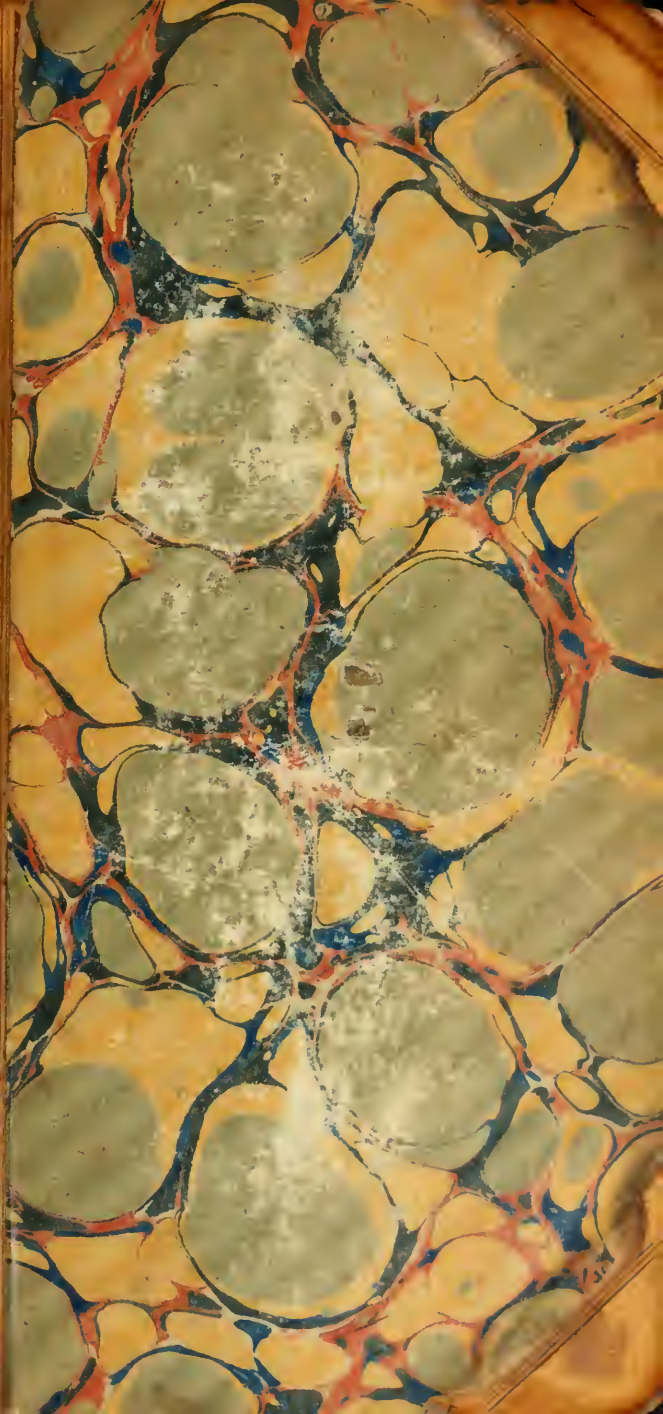


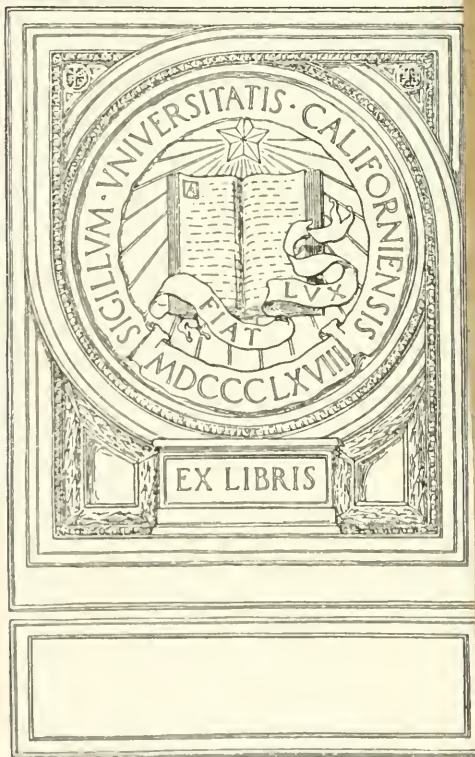
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GILBERT GURNEY.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "SAYINGS AND DOINGS,"
"LOVE AND PRIDE,"
ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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GILBERT GURNEY.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN I quitted the scene of action, I felt annoyed; not so much, perhaps, by what I had seen and heard, as by the reflection, that I was to re-commence my London life in a new place. My servant—one of the best, for the first seven years of his servitude, that ever lived—had proceeded, upon his arrival, to my old lodgings: they were occupied by another tenant, but my kind landlady recommended me to an excellent house, where I should be as comfortable as possible; at all events, until the gentleman who then was in possession of my former apartments should be disposed to quit them.

I hated then, almost as much as I do now, a change of domicile;—put me down once comfortably, and there let me rest. When I reached my destined resting-place, I was disturbed, because the parlour of the house was to the right of the door, instead of the left, as it was in my other domicile; and then the staircase went up the middle of the house, and my sitting-room and bed-room did not communicate, and I had to cross from one to the other in my dressing gown, if I chose, as I invariably did, to breakfast in that “free and easy” vestment; and when I was lighted to bed, by an elderly woman in black—my man having retired to rest—I thought she looked cross, and sour, and strange, and not in the least the sort of woman by whom I liked to be waited upon.

However, *faute de mieux*, I went to my bed, but not to sleep; a thousand things flitted into my mind. First, all the extraordinary developments of character, male and female, by which I had been instructed and edified during the preceding evening;—then, the affair of

Emma;—then, the *bouleversement* of my agreeable acquaintance with Mrs. Fletcher Green;—and then the extraordinary termination of my friendship with Daly, whose conduct, in spite of the opinion of my friend, the gallant lieutenant of Life Guards, had been, I thought, blameless in the first instance, and generous in the last: and so I concluded my reveries with a decision, that I had been led into an affair, with regard to him, which I could not but regret, and by a resolution, that of all earthly absurdities—not to speak of its immorality—duelling was the greatest; because the injured man is just as likely to be shot as the man who has injured him. The third possible case, of the injured man shooting himself, I did not take into calculation.

I recollected, how strongly the greatest and wisest of men had reprobated the custom. How the King (Henry II.) of France, after witnessing, in great pomp, the celebrated duel between Jarnac and Chasteneraye, at St. Germain en Laye, in 1547, was so much struck by the barbarity and injustice of the system, that he put

an end to it. To be sure, his sons, Charles IX. and Henry III. restored it; but they had not been witnesses to, or, as I had been, a principal in, a work of so much folly and injustice.

I believe my thoughts had taken this turn, not only because I wished to put myself sufficiently in the wrong with myself, to justify my seeking a reconciliation with my late antagonist, but because I had very recently been reading in the Isle of Wight, a speech of James I., delivered upon his first coming into the Star Chamber to sit, as judge, upon a case of duel, against which he had issued a proclamation.

“Of all bloodshed,” saith the king, “this of the duel is the worst:—first, because it comes not on revenge of other blood, which may stir some compassion, as when a man had killed a father or a brother, it was lawful, by the old law, for the next of kin to kill the murderer, if he were caught before he entered into the city of refuge. But the duel is no revenge of former blood, but a sharpening and whetting swords to shed blood, and that, many times, for vain

words, which may be recalled. To revenge that with blood which cannot be recalled, how vain a thing is it! for a man, by God's permission, may kill a man, but he cannot bring him to life again. A man hastily falls out with another, and so to the lie, and so to strokes, and so to murder. This is yet more to be pitied, because it is in heat; but, to do so in cold blood, as the duel is performed, casts away all plea of mercy before God and the king."

Much more did his Majesty propound to the court, which I have forgotten, except, indeed, his sneer at the degradation of the word honour, which his Majesty declared could only be derived from the king, and was, therefore, inherent in no man. "Where," said the English Solomon,—and it is curious enough to quote at a time when without, I trust, any serious diminution of loyalty to the sovereign from that which the country felt due to the kingly office in the days of the Star Chamber, men certainly hold opinions somewhat at variance with those of his sapient Majesty,—"Where," says King James, "will

you have honour here amongst us, who live in a monarchy, if not from the king? Men are bold to give the title of honour where it is not due. I have warned the marshals of it, that the title of honour *shall not be given to gentlemen*—worship belongs to them, and not honour, which is proper to statesmen and counsellors. For what is the reason that a man, never so great in honour, being attainted, loseth honour, but because the king resumeth it—*Rex dat et aufert honorem*; and he that grants honour, must interpret it. Will you, then, leave God and the king, and the king and the state, the law and the counsel, and get honour in an alchouse, from a swordsman, that hath scarce a rag at his back—a Barmoutho man!—one that dares not go out of Milford-lane, for debt? If this be honour, it is a ragged honour—a base, popular honour; and, to say truth, popular honour is but a treasonable honour in a monarchy. If you will have such honour, you must go to the low countries for it—here you may not have it.”

Poor King James!—little did he think, that in two hundred years, or a little more, after his death, titles and distinctions, of which he was so jealous, would have been so scattered and tost about, that every Member of Parliament,—Barmoutho man or not,—would come to be designated as “honourable;”—that every alderman would be dubbed worthy;—every officer pronounced gallant;—every barrister be styled learned;—and every attorney called gentleman.

However, the principle of Solomon struck deep into my mind; and, although the authorities of Doctor South, in all piety and seriousness, and Lord Chesterfield, in all the force of ridicule, might have sufficiently satisfied me, the *dictum* of an English monarch, delivered, too, in the Star Chamber, outweighed them all.

As for his wise Majesty’s disquisition upon the difference between hot blood and cold blood, it affected not me, because, as I have already noted down, I never had the slightest intention of hitting Daly,—a circumstance, which, however,

judging by what actually did occur, might, perhaps, have proved fatal to him. In fact, as I have already said, my heart yearned for a reconciliation. I know what it is for a man to see a woman the wife of another, whom he had, for many years, intended to have been his own ; but, as I argued to myself, there is no accounting for tastes. Emma preferred Daly, and, as she herself says, never thought of me in the light of a lover ; and certain it is, that I was led to consider myself more to blame in the affair than anybody else, since the very next step of my life went to prove that I could very easily mistake the candid good-nature of friendship for an affection of a more serious and tender character.

I admit, that such a disposition to misunderstand—or, rather, to misconstrue—might have had its origin in conceit and vanity ; but this I know, that if women would but consider what powerful, what dangerous, and,—speaking of man's happiness or misery,—destructive weapons eyes are, they might, perhaps, be a little more careful in using them. Cardinal D'Este, in the

year 1505, is said to have caused the eyes of his natural brother, Jules, to be put out, merely because a young lady, to whom his eminence was attached, happened one day to praise them. Far be it from me to take such a course with any of those bright orbs, which, if I have not very much deceived myself, have in the course of my life very much betrayed me. So much for my conceit—so much for my repentance—and so much for my desire to be reconciled with the Dalys.

Three—something more than three months, had elapsed, since my last disappearance from London, and November was setting in, with all its *agrémens* of yellow fogs, north-easterly winds, and drizzling mists: the hypochondriacs were getting ready their halters, and the demand for arsenic was considerable. After breakfast, however, I sallied forth, intending, in the first place, to apply myself to Hull, who would be sure to give me information about my generous friend. After having obtained this intelligence, I proposed continuing my walk as far as

Broad Street, where, I thought, if I did not find a letter from Cuthbert, I should, at all events, hear news of him; and, accordingly, I pursued the track to Hull's chambers, to which he had frequently invited me, and paddled through the mud, with an umbrella over my head, fully prepared to resist the influence of the weather. But such are the extraordinary occurrences of this life, and such the curious coincidences, which any man, who has a turn for observation or remark, is sure to perceive, that I had not dabbled along two streets from my new lodgings, before I saw the identical object of my search,—Daly himself.

We were on opposite sides of the way. I saw *him*, and saw that he saw *me*. The moment was trying and critical;—would *he* break the ice—should *I*? Our eyes met, and the doubt seemed to be mutual—the inclination much the same. It is quite impossible to describe the sort of feeling by which we were both actuated. I saw he wished to cross over and speak;—I wished, (and thought he saw I did,) to cross over

and speak to him. I cannot explain the affair of the minute which followed; but, at the end of it, we had shaken hands, and were walking together.

“ Behold, his anger melts—he longs to love you,
To call you friend.”

—I never felt more awkwardly in my life. It was a question, whether I had better or not recur to anything that had passed;—we *had been* friends—we *were* friends. There *had been* a sort of a hitch—a hiatus, but the fight had set that to rights, and I had been wounded, which was as much as a man of honour could expect, and my friend had not wounded me, which made the affair of reconciliation easier. But then Emma—I could not screw my courage to “the sticking place,” as Shakspeare says,—I could not ask after *her*; and Daly seemed—which was odd enough for *him*—rather puzzled, whether *he* should speak of her: so we said nothing for a minute or two. At last, he asked me if I was staying in town? Being November, I did not like to commit myself altogether, so I said, I

had come to town the day before, and was going away to-morrow.

“Deuced strange world this, Gurney,” said Daly, who began to recover his composure; “you are a capital fellow—now be the best of capital fellows—you know all my affairs by this time. Have you a mind to come and dine with me and Emma?—she’ll be delighted to see you—so shall I.”

I thought Daly showed the greatest possible wisdom, in sinking all the intermediate events which had occurred between our parting and (literally) our meeting. His invitation was what I really sought.

“I am your man,” said I.

“At six,” said Daly,—“nobody but my wife.”

“Where are you in town?” said I.

“In Duke Street, Manchester Square,” said Daly; “but you won’t come?”

“Upon my honour I will,” replied I, “provided you think that Mrs. Daly will not object to receive me.”

“On the contrary,” said Daly, “she is anxious to show you that her friendship is unchanged, as ours, my dear fellow, I hope will ever remain.”

He again shook hands with me, in a manner to convince me of the sincerity of his professions; and having told me the number of his residence, we parted, but to meet again at dinner time.

The moment Daly was out of sight, I felt, although extremely happy at having achieved my scheme of reconciliation, that I had committed myself to a scene of a particularly embarrassing character. I had called out Daly—for all he knew, would have shot him, if I had not by chance shot myself—I was then actually bound in sureties to keep the peace towards him, and we had been separated without any opportunity of explanation. That he, a man of the world and of spirit, would think no more of this, unless perhaps to applaud my anxiety to vindicate my honour, I felt quite sure; indeed the manner in which he sought my hand the moment our eyes met, and he felt satisfied that I should

reciprocate his sentiments, convinced me that our difference was for ever at rest, and I left any discussion which might arise in the course of the evening to chance, because I saw how it would terminate; but with respect to Emma I began to get particularly nervous. He assured me of her readiness—even anxiety, to receive me as a friend in a new character, and with perfect cordiality. But still, could she pardon my sanguinary proceedings as regarded her husband?—would *she* too steep in oblivion all the past circumstances of the case? these questions puzzled me, and all I hoped was, that there might be some other guests to break the solemnity of the party, or that her mother and the major might be yet living with them, to add to the hilarity of the evening.

I pursued my walk into the city, having first ascertained that my friend Hull was gone into the north of England, where he had an estate which he annually visited. At the agent's in Broad Street, I found, as I had expected, a letter from my brother Cuthbert, acknowledg-

ing mine, in which I had recounted the loss of our excellent mother, and informing me that his health was still declining, that the climate decidedly disagreed with him, expressing apprehensions that he should be obliged to return to England in a year or two, and begging me, in pursuance of his former suggestions, to consider the subject of coming out maturely and deliberately; not to risk my health or my happiness by a voluntary expatriation, but if I could reconcile such a proceeding with my views of comfort, and medical opinions were favourable as to the effects of the change, he strongly recommended me to do so, as the opportunity of fixing me in a highly respectable sphere of society, and in a most lucrative business, could only be made available while he was on the spot, to delegate to me in case of the necessity of his absence, that share of work and profit in the concern, which I might eventually retain, supposing he should at length find it necessary to relinquish it altogether.

I read this letter attentively, and felt affec-

tionately grateful for the solicitude Cuthbert expressed for a brother, his interest in whom could only arise from the most disinterested feelings; and from Broad Street to the corner of St. Paul's Church-yard, I continued firm in the intention of starting immediately for eastern climes. The resolution, however, was a good deal shaken by the time I reached Charing-cross; and long before I got to the bottom of St. James's Street, I had made up my mind to do nothing hastily, but—which was always then, and has been ever since, a very favourite system with me,—to wait and see what would turn up.

I cannot now comprehend the feeling of reluctance to quit England, which at that time so completely possessed me. It was a kind of inverted nostalgia; and never did Swiss more ardently desire to return to his native land than I not to quit mine. I am not the least ashamed of the feeling, as a national feeling, or as an English feeling, for to this moment I cannot, unless when health requires it, com-

prehend the taste which leads the great and wealthy to abandon a country like our own; quit the halls of their fathers and the cottages of their tenants; the air which they first breathed, and the earth they first trod, for the feverish and unsatisfactory life, which they invariably lead on the continent.

At the time of Cuthbert's offer the continent was closed; the long war prevented the emigration which, after its conclusion, became so fashionable. Paris, Vienna, Florence, Naples, all were shut against me; so that although I might have extremely well relished a tour for the summer, it was not possible under existing circumstances, — India was all that was left for me; and although some of the English magnets which once attracted me had lost their power, Calcutta *did* seem a very long way from Hyde Park Corner—or as the French general spelled it, in addressing a letter to Apsley House, “Hépaquana,”—and at the turnpike which then stood there, ended, in my mind, the habitable

world. I might perhaps,—so contradictory are our natures,—had that same turnpike been authoritatively fixed as the boundary of my range, have perished of a desire to go to Hammersmith, as the old man who had never quitted Milan during a life of eighty-four years, died of grief, because, in order to try the effect, the grand duke prohibited his departure from it.

Besides, I will not conceal the fact, there were the dangers of the seas to encounter—dangers, which to a landsman, and especially one of Cockayne, appear terrific. To a man who in a stormy night, while the gusts are rattling his windows, and howling down his chimney, has read the adventures of Falconer, and Drury, and Ashton, such prospects are not particularly agreeable; not to speak of having dived into David Chytreus, the Chronieler of Saxony, and the history of the destruction of the Danish Admiral and nine thousand men, in attempting to get to anchor at Wisbo, during the war between Denmark and Sweden, nor of having

read a list of calamities almost interminable, recorded by Osorius in his history of Portugal, including all the perils of Captain Capral, Captain Aquilaire, and Captain Sodre; and after that, having been gratified with the following ancient lines by way of moral to the melancholy tales:—

L'avare marchant
Les mers va cerchant,
Qui souvent lui font
De son avarice
Très bonne justice,
L'abysmant au fond.

All these trifles combined, I must admit, did not tend either to soothe my apprehensions, or excite my desire for so protracted an excursion; I therefore determined, according to my ordinary practice, to postpone the consideration of my letter *till the next day*. Whoever has read Miss Edgeworth's story of "To-morrow,"—and who has not?—will perfectly comprehend the turn of my mind, and then, perhaps, will be less

surprised at the way in which my life has been spent.

One thing is to be done every day, however, which cannot conveniently be deferred until the next : I mean eating one's dinner; and therefore it became necessary that I should take such steps as might ensure my appearance at Daly's mansion at six o'clock. As the hour drew nigh, my nervousness increased. I felt assured that nothing like envy or uncharitableness would actuate my mind as I ascended the stairs of his elegant house ; and that all the ideas I once entertained of Emma's fortune being mine, were so completely buried in oblivion, that I should rather rejoice than not, in seeing their happiness, and that display of comfort and splendour, which her wealth might justly and properly secure to herself and the husband of her choice.

Still it *was* something to do, and I began, when I began to dress, to wish I had postponed it till "to-morrow." Yet I had been desirous of the reconciliation with my friend; and since Emma and he were now one, I could not be re-

conciled by halves; and so, as the proverb says—
“In for a penny in for a pound,” I began dressing for the visit.

At six I desired my servant to do what I supposed my friend Daly would, under his present circumstances have considered a most abominable action—call a hackney coach.

“He lisped in numbers, and the numbers came;”

and at about ten minutes after the clock of St. George’s, Hanover Square, had struck the hour, I stepped into the litter,—I mean the litter at the bottom of the “Jarvy,”—with a careful regard to the prevention of the adhesion of any of the straws to my black stockings; loose trowsers, or even long pantaloons, being, at that period, articles not considered fit to appear in at dinner.

Right glad am I to observe that the ladies patronesses of Almacks’, the great marriage-bazaar of London, still adhere to their predilection for the decencies of dress; not but that

a foreigner, reading the implied denunciation of trowsers and pantaloons, *et hoc genus omne*, must be a good deal puzzled by finding inscribed upon the cards of admission to so high and delicate an assembly, these most curious words, — “ No gentlemen admitted without breeches and stockings.”

Away we drove, at least my worthy Phaeton, with my trusty squire at his side ; but what with the wet, and what with the fog, and what with the hill up Wigmore Street, we did not make quite so much way as I had hoped for. However, my old friends Time and Patience served my turn, and having entered Duke Street, the coach stopped; my man got down and inquired, and then confidently directed the coachman, who accordingly drove up to a milliner’s shop, a little below Morin’s Hotel and Coffee-house. He what he called “ rapped ” at the door : upon which I thrust my head out of the window, and asked him in no very measured terms, what the denuce he was at.

“ This is the house, Sir,” said Peter.

“ This !” said I.

“ Yes, Sir,” replied he, “ this is number——”

At this moment the door was opened by a tall, fishy-eyed maid, with flaxen hair, and a parchment skin, doubtfully displayed by the light of a tallow candle, visibly affected by the gusts of wind, which in November afternoons are in the habit of disporting about the streets of London.

“ This must be a mistake,” said I.

“ I’ll ask,” said Peter—and he did ; and sure enough the maid with the curls and the candle was the domestic servant of my excellent friend Bob Daly ; and the door at which I had imagined he had “ rapped” by mistake, was the entrance to the blissful abode of that vivacious creature and his amiable Emma. I was, I confess, somewhat surprised at the appearance of Daly’s residence and its accessories ; but as I always believe there are reasons for everything, and was equally satisfied that it was no business of mine to attempt to account for his mode of living, I stepped out of my coach, shook the

straw from my stockings, and entered the passage, which reminded me not a little of the story so admirably told in Ireland's Illustrations of Hogarth, of the two brothers who clubbed their means to buy an elephant, and the sad fate thereof.

“What name, Sir?” said the fair portress.

“Gurney,” said I—as what else should I have said.

“What time shall I come for you, Sir?” said Peter.

“Not at all,” said I, feeling my position difficult and critical, and not wishing by any means to pledge myself to any particular duration of stay, but preferring to leave my sojourn at Daly's, elastic,—to be contracted or extended at pleasure.

I followed the broad-backed virgin up the ladder-like staircase, and was ushered into the very neat but very small drawing-room, of evidently a furnished lodging, with a long black pole over the three slips of windows, and a deep drapery pendant therefrom, with brass stars, from whose

centres darted rays of bright yellow calico, looking

“ As doth the blushing, discontented sun,
From out the fiery portal of the East.”

Black-backed chairs, with nobs to match the stars, an abbreviated sofa, and before it a table thereunto proportioned stood near the walls, which were decorated with a circular mirror, nobbed round, so like that which once belonged to my “sainted Sire,” in Bolsover-street, that I almost loved it for its family likeness. The room was filled with an atmosphere of mingled fog and smoke, and the house generally pervaded with the odour of roasted mutton.

After a few moments' delay, Daly came in, and greeted me as I wished to be greeted—I only trembled for the first meeting with the lady—in she came—held out her hand, and said, “Well, Mr. Gurney, how do *you* do?”

“Pretty well, I thank you,” said I—and the embarrassment was over; but—may I say so?—the disappointment had only begun. In spite of

all she had said upon the subject—or rather, in spite of all I had heard from Daly—in spite of everything in the world, I *did* believe that our first interview after her marriage would have been productive of some greater effect than appeared when the event of our meeting really occurred: a sigh—a blush—a tear, perhaps, or at the very least, a cold and trembling hand; not a bit of it—the healthful colour of her cheek fled not, neither did it increase; her hand was as warm as it ought to be, and did not shake at all; and her “Well, how do *you* do, Mr. Gurney?” was pronounced in the same tone, with the same ease, and with as little embarrassment, as if we had met the day before, or had never seen each other in the whole course of our lives.

But what do you imagine was the next thing she said?—nobody *could* guess.

“Mr. Daly,” said she—Mister, too!—“how abominably this room smokes.”

“Dreadfully!” said Daly. “We had better open one of the windows.”

“What,” said Emma, “and let in the fog—that would be vastly wise—a horrid hole you find us in, Mr. Gurney.”

I was puzzled what to say—I quite agreed with my fair friend, but did not know whether ought to own it.

“I don’t think it horrid at all,” said Daly; “however I chose it, and I suppose, my dear, that is quite enough to set you against it.—I hope, Gurney, you can eat mutton,” added Daly, turning to me, in hopes, I presume, of turning the conversation.

I was about to say, that nothing on earth is so good as mutton, when I was prevented by the lady of the house, who, in a tone anything but gentle, accompanied with a laugh, anything but mirthful, exclaimed, “Whether he can eat mutton I don’t know, I am sure he can smell it.”

“Well, my love,” said Daly, “one cannot help smelling dinner in a small house.”

“Thank you, Mr. Daly,” replied the lady. “What clever creatures these wits are, ar’n’t they, Mr. Gurney?”

“Well,” said Daly, “never mind, so as we get the dinner, for I am hungry.”

“I am never hungry in London,” said Mrs. Daly.

The tone and spirit of the conversation startled my ear more than the general appearance of everything around me, and I began most heartily to repent me of having accepted an invitation to witness what seemed to me very like a representation of Catherine and Petruchio, when the door opened, and the maid entered the room with a small piece of paper in her hand, which she delivered to her master, saying at the same time, in a tone as little subdued as that of her amiable mistress,

“The boy, Sir, is come from the tallow-chandler’s, and says, if you please, he has a large bill to pay to-morrow, and——”

“Nonsense!” said Daly; “why do you bring up such things as these now?—don’t you see I am engaged—say I will call to-morrow.”

“I told him that, Sir,” said the girl, rather angry at being snubbed before company; “but

the boy says that you said that three days ago, and ——”

“Well, I’ll come down and speak to him myself,” said Daly; and he quitted the room, *grondé-ing* the girl at a severe rate.

“Well, Mr. Gurney,” said the lady, when her husband had left the room; “great change since we met last. I suppose you thought me a mad girl to run away. I assure you I think so too, now, myself—pretty business, is’n’t it.”

There was an abruptness, and, as I felt, an indelicacy, in Mrs. Daly’s thus plunging *in medias res*, and in half a dozen words giving the history of what I felt to be her infidelity, of what she proclaimed as her imprudence, and what she now appeared to consider her repentance—I was staggered.

“Yes,” said I, generally, “strange things *do* happen.”

“I am sure,” said Emma, “I never expected what *has* happened.”

“No,” said I—hoping every instant that Daly would return.

“ I hope Mrs. Haines is quite well.”

“ Mamina,” said Emma, whose whole manner and air, and even tone of voice, appeared to me to be entirely changed by matrimony ; “ Mrs. M’Guffin, you mean, I suppose ?”

I hemmed assent.

“ She is pretty well in health, but, as you may suppose, not in particularly good spirits ;— as soon as they can manage it, they will go to Ireland—oh !—I forgot—you saw the Major that day of the duel !”

I positively stared at my fair companion—I could not comprehend whether the jumble of conversation, involving all the most delicate points to which Daly’s good taste had specially avoided a recurrence, arose from a sort of callous indifference to events involving nothing less than what I at one time considered *my* earthly happiness, and probably *her* husband’s life, or from sheer innocence and simplicity. If it were the latter, to be sure, she *did* dance among the hot ploughshares, in a manner which our once persecuted Queen would have envied, could she have lived to see it.

How much farther my fair companion would have gone, I do not pretend to guess—luckily Daly, having despatched the tallow chandler's boy, returned, anathematizing the stupidity of Charlotte—such was the name of the huge wax doll who had opened the door to me—for pestering him with such absurd messages.

“Emma, love,” said the Benedick; “have you got the keys?”

Keys, thought I—Daly with a bunch of keys—well!

“Not I,” replied Emma; “I dare say you have left them about somewhere—what do you want?”

“I want to get out the wine,” said Daly.

Get out the wine, thought I—picturing to myself two foggy decanters, half full of the remnants of yesterday's libation, with a sort of furry rim just over the surface, of which the expression gave me a strong idea.

“There's none out,” replied the lady.

“Well then, I must get some,” said the subdued husband.

“You might, I should think,” said Emma, “considering how long you have been in, have done that before ;—is’n’t Robinson in ?”

“I don’t know, love,” said Daly, who seemed to me to have totally lost the perception of the ridiculous, for which he was so particularly and pre-eminently famous, or if not, to have acquired that peculiar sort of blindness which sees no personal or family imperfections. *I* never beheld anything more absurd than the whole scene.

Away he went—and then left again, *tête-à-tête*, with the lady, I had—thanks to the convenient thinness of a pair of *battants*, about the size of the doors of a moderately sized mahogany wardrobe, by which the back room was separated from the front—the satisfaction of hearing the creaking of a corkscrew, followed by the pop-out of a cork, performed, no doubt, by the dexterity of mine host, who, not more than half a year before, used to give a capital imitation of that self-same operation, which concluded by his stuffing his finger into his mouth

and pulling it out suddenly, with what he facetiously, rather than elegantly, called a “flop.”

“Don’t you think Mr. Daly altered?”

“No,” said I; “much as usual.”

“He has grown so slovenly,” said his wife; “and then he eats so much, and drinks so much—and he is so dull and stupid.”

“Oh,” said I, “that he never can be.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Emma.

I felt I was treading upon mined ground—because I calculated that as we could hear my excellent friend’s performance upon the bottles in the next room, even to the gurgling sound of the wine as it underwent the process of transfusion from the green bottle to the decanter, my excellent friend might with equal facility hear the observations of his better-half, and whatever rejoinder I might venture to put—so I hesitated—and hemmed—and looked, I believe, something like what I meant.

Emma was quicker in her comprehension of my thoughts and feelings than I had anticipated

—she evidently read telegraphs with the greatest facility, for having looked at me for an answer to her last observation, or perhaps, for an observation in return, and finding none come, she said, “Oh, *he* is gone down again.”

Well, said I to myself—did I really think it necessary to call out my excellent friend Daly for depriving me of this perfect piece of excellence! The blindness of a lover—for I once was her’s—became more evident than ever I expected to admit. Yet, surely, something must have changed her since we last met—changed her, too, since Daly had written so enthusiastically about her grace and elegance—I saw neither; those eyes, on which I loved to gaze, roved about, and rolled, in a manner most unpleasant, and the once sylph-like creature seemed afflicted with a sort of nervous irritation which prevented her from even sitting still in her chair.

I heard a rattling of dishes and plates—the back drawing-room was the dining-room—I heard Daly superintending, and the great doll

whispering—a confused sound of “the butter-boat there,”—“mind, the macaroni at top,”—and a sort of hustle-bustle kind of confusion, in the midst of which Daly, who seemed to me to be a sort of white Mungo in the establishment, came in, and throwing himself down in a chair, which he had nearly broken by the shock, exclaimed, “I wish they would let us have dinner !”

This was a dreadful trial—having heard him behind the scenes—as I should have said a year or two before—getting the scenery and machinery in order, to see him swagger into the stage box and cry, “When does the play begin?” was rather too much; but if that was a teaser, the look which Mrs. Daly gave me—who of course heard the dialogue between her husband and the Dolly—was annihilation. Open flew the folding doors.

“Dinner, Ma’am,” said the attendant sylph.

“Come, Gurney,” said Daly; “take Mrs. Daly.”

Take, thought I—considering it was a stride of a yard and a half from the sofa where she sat to the seat she was destined to occupy at the dinner table, there seemed but little need of *taking*—however, I did as I was directed, put out my left arm pinion-wise, and for the first time for several months felt the momentary pressure of Mrs. Daly's right—she took her seat—I waited till Daly came, who—said grace!—and then the dinner was displayed to our view.

“We can offer you but little in *this* way,” said Daly; “here are some mackerel—some mutton, and, presently, some macaroni.”

“Oh, you don't expect any fine dinners here,” said Mrs. Daly; “do you, Mr. Gurney?”

I made a bow, and said nothing, but grinned. I cared nothing about the dinner; but nevertheless, I felt it impossible to compliment it, *quoad* banquet.

“The mackerel are stale,” said Mrs. Daly.

“The mutton is raw!” exclaimed her husband.

“We are nicely served,” said the lady —
“Where is Robinson?” continued she, addressing the maid, and looking, as I thought, like a fury.

The maid, who evidently felt that the reply was not suited to the public ear, leant over her mistress, and said, “Robinson will be in directly, Ma’am; he was obliged to dress the old gentleman’s hair, what lodges at No. 16, but the moment he has done he will come.”

This speech, though perfectly intelligible as to its import, conveyed to my mind, as it did to my fair hostess’s ears, the fact that the “gentleman usher daily waiter,”—whose advent was so proclaimed, and whose appearance was so anxiously desired, was neither more nor less than a hair-dresser of the neighbourhood, who enhanced his income by waiting at the tables of those whose establishments were deficient in males—*that* was clear—but the evidence of this fact, and its unequivocal character only added to the mystification as to the

causes which could produce such effects, and puzzled me beyond measure to comprehend why Daly, who, when he had nothing, contrived to live like a gentleman—upon a small scale—barring the “tripodial dinner”—should, now that he actually possessed the *toison d’or*—have sunk so very much below his former level.

I drank wine with Mrs. Daly—it was called sherry—what it really was I have not the smallest idea. Emma, the once gentle and genteel, drank porter out of a pewter pot—I wondered—I looked unintentionally towards Daly—he seemed totally indifferent to her proceedings.

The mutton was, as it had been pronounced, ill-done, and tough as leather—some high-smelling brocoli, and a few black-dotted potatoes, were the vegetables—the macaroni was the climax—preparations in Dr. Gardner’s window, in Long Acre, would have been tempting by comparison. I endeavoured to swallow eight or ten inches of the “tobacco-pipes made

easy," and was getting comfortable—for what are serious ills to others, are to me agreeable varieties—when my plate was whisked away in a gale redolent of pomatum. It had been snatched from my presence by the hand of Robinson, fresh from the head of the gentleman at No. 16. However, I saw a gleam of satisfaction flit over the features of the once-placid Emma when she found the barber at his post—a frown and a nod following, expelled the waxy-faced maid from the apartment, and Robinson remained and officiated alone for the rest of the dinner.

It would be tiresome, and even superfluous, to set down the numerous snappings and snarlings which characterized the conversation of the happy Dalys. One general rule appeared to have been established in the family, which might have been fairly called, as the old women have it, "the rule of contraries;" for neither one of the domestic pair said, stated, or even suggested anything which did not produce a direct negative from the other.

“The room is very hot,” said one.

“Hot!” said the other,—“*I* am miserably cold.”

“Clever man, that Mr. Wilson,” says the lady.

“The greatest bore in London,” rejoins the gentleman.

“Claret is the only wine fit to drink,” declares the master of the house.

“I cannot bear the taste of claret,” exclaims the mistress.

“Dear me,” cries the lady, “it is near nine o’clock;—oh! I forgot—that clock is half an hour too fast.”

“On the contrary,” says the gentleman, “it is ten minutes too slow by the Horse Guards.”

Whether the last contradiction was intended to produce an effect, I cannot say. A consequence did certainly result from it, which I own I did not so much regret as I once fancied I should regret a separation from Emma Haines. The lady declared she had no idea it was so late, and rose to retire. That movement was

the first she had made, either mentally or bodily, to which her loving spouse did not object. I, of course, stood up, opened the door, and gave her the *exitus*. Daly never moved; but the moment the door was closed, drew his chair close to the fire, and appeared resolved to do, what sailors call, “making snug for the night.”

“Well,” said Daly, as soon as I was seated *vis à vis*, “strange things happen—don’t they?”

I answered in the affirmative. Mrs. Daly had made the very same observation to me, while Daly was negotiating with the tallow-chandler, and opening the wine before dinner. The remark appeared “somewhat musty,” but, as by a sort of unconscious sympathy, they both *sported* it, I concluded that something *very strange* had occurred, I waited for further enlightenment.

“You find Emma a good deal altered,” said Daly—*sotto voce*—at the same time pointing to the folding-doors, which alone separated her from us, in order to induce me to adopt the style *pianis-*

simo in my reply. But what could I say in reply to such a question? I did find her altered;—her manner, her look, the expression of her countenance, the very tone of her voice, was altered;—the milk of her kindness seemed curdled—by what acidulating process I did not know. All I did in answer, was to make a sort of little, neutral, negative, affirmative grunt, such as I have often before endeavoured to describe.

“I suppose,” said Daly, “you were a good deal surprised to find us living here, and in this manner?”

“Why,” said I, “if you ask me, and wish me to reply candidly, I *am* surprised—but, I must also add, agreeably; for I have seen so many instances of the mad precipitancy of spending suddenly-acquired wealth, and so much misery following a reckless waste of affluence and happiness, that I am more delighted than I can express to you, at finding you going on in this quiet way, rather reducing than increasing your ordinary course of expenditure.”

“My dear fellow,” said my friend, “you know me pretty well—do you think that I, Bob Daly,—the uncontrollable Bob,—who always proceeded, like Pat in the play, to

‘Spend half-a-crown out of sixpence a day,’

should be here pent up—‘cabined, cribbed, confined,’ in a first floor in Duke Street, Manchester Square, if I could be anywhere else?—Don’t you know our history?—haven’t you heard, my dear fellow, we are stumped?”

“Stumped,” said I, almost unconsciously repeating the quaint, but woefully-expressive word.

“Positively stumped,” said Daly;—“don’t speak loud—I thought, of course, you had heard of it. Blinkinsop has bolted.”

“Who is Blinkinsop?” said I.

“Who is Blinkinsop,” echoed my friend,—“the greatest villain unhung—the solicitor of *her* father;”—her with an emphasis, and an indicator point with the fore-finger of his right hand towards the doors of the drawing-room;—

“sole surviving trustee, and entire manager of his affairs. Splendid fellow,—lived like a fighting cock ;—balls, parties, fetes, horses, carriages, yachts, pictures, books, plate, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera ;—top of the tree—pleasant, placable, popular. All went smooth ;—the old lady was enraptured with him—her jointure paid punctually, and whenever Emma expressed a wish—pecuniarily—Blinkinsop was too happy to meet her wishes. In fact, the Blinkinsops were the Lares and Penates of the Haines’s.”

“And did they receive the adulation ungratefully?” said I.

“My marriage,” said Daly, “brought matters to a conclusion. Emma’s portion was required ;—then came delays and difficulties. M’Guffin, whose object in marrying her mother was as little equivocal as mine was known to have been, was exceedingly active and anxious at the crisis ; and, as the family affection for the trustee was not transferred, or transferable to the Major, he pressed upon the worthy gentleman, took advice of counsel, proceeded accordingly,

and the next week found the exemplary Blinkinsop on his way to the United States of America,—having appropriated to his own uses, and those of his interesting family, every farthing of the accumulated property of the late highly respectable Joseph William Haines, Esq., father to the amiable and lovely wife of Robert Fergusson Daly, Esq., your very humble servant to command.”

“What,” said I, “are you *obliged* to live thus?”

“At present,” said Daly; “but how long the worthy landlady, and the industrious tradesmen in the neighbourhood, will oblige us, by permitting us to live at all, I cannot pretend to guess. We exist in hopes, that something like a dividend will restore us—perhaps one and ninepence in the pound out of the squandered property;—but till then, we vegetate after the fashion of the chameleons.”

“How dreadful!” said I.

“It is, upon my life,” said Daly. “I however lament it less from the actual loss and dis-

appointment as to the money, than because the misfortune has worked a total revolution in that poor girl's character and disposition. She was everything that you described, but the sudden fall from affluence and comfort has completely changed her:—her existence is one continued fever—irritable, contradictory, restless, and jealous—nothing can be done to please, to soothe, or gratify her.”

“Well,” said I, “but surely she should not make you suffer in happiness and comfort for evils, in the production of which you could have had neither share nor participation.”

“That's it,” said Daly; “it is now of no use arguing with her upon that point, and I have ceased anything like discussion; but the extraordinary feature of her transformation is, that because our elopement and marriage produced the *dénouement*, or rather catastrophe, she considers it to have been the cause of her misfortunes—a conclusion founded upon false premises,—but from which I can neither lead nor drive her.”

“I admit,” said I, “the alteration in her character is perceptible.”

“My dear friend,” said Daly, “like Sir Peter, since she made me happy, I have been the miserablest dog alive. I am conscious that I have had no share whatever in creating those ills which have overwhelmed her, and darkened her prospects of happiness ; but that, on the contrary, even if the fact does not diminish her burthen, I am obliged to share her misfortunes, and yet nothing I can say is right—nothing I can do acceptable.”

In the midst of this outpouring, a violent knocking against the folding doors announced the proximity of poor Daly’s tyrant.

“Well, dear?” cried he.

“Not at all well,” replied the lady, opening the doors ; “it is past ten o’clock—do you choose to have tea sent there, or are you coming here?”

“In one moment we will be with you,” said Daly.

“Oh,” said Mrs. Daly, “I am in no hurry

for your society. I thought, perhaps, Mr. Gurney would like his tea—he used to be very fond of tea.”

It is extraordinary how much a woman—even a young and inexperienced woman—can say in a few words, and how admirably she can convey a meaning by her manner of saying them, with which the words themselves have nothing in the world to do. The tone in which the allusion to *me* and my foregone partiality for the innocent infusion of which she spoke, gave poor Daly to understand, that in *those* times she *was* very anxious to please me,—that she consulted my taste, and even remembered, that very moment, my likings and dislikings. All this I saw—and saw that it was meant to vex him; while the emphatic manner in which she spoke of what *I* might like, proclaimed not only her solicitude for my personal gratification, but her total carelessness as to her husband’s society.

I could not choose but admire the amiable docility of my friend, under the infliction of his lady wife’s sneers. Nor could I help calling to

mind the words Butler puts into the lady's answer to Hudibras, as a justification of his quiescence, and an illustration of Emma's severity:

“ Nor can the rigourest course,
Prevail, unless to make us worse,
Who still, the harsher we are used,
Are farther off from being reduced,
And scorn to abate for any ills
The least punctilios of our wills.
Force does but whet us well t'apply ;
Arts born with us for remedy ;
Which all your politics, as yet,
Have ne'er been able to defeat ;
For when you've tried all sorts of ways,
What fools we make of ye in plays ;
While all the favours we afford,
Are but to girt you with the sword,
To fight our battles in our steads,
And have your brains beat out o' your heads.”

I think, altogether, it was one of the most unpleasant afternoons I ever passed—it did not last long ; for just as the clock struck eleven, Mrs. Daly, having looked very pale, and rather sleepy, for about half an hour, got up and lighted one of two candles, which stood in two bed-chamber candlesticks, on a table in the drawing-

room, and retired to her apartment, having shaken hands with me, and given a look to her husband, as much as to say, “don’t let him stay long.”—The truth is, that I felt no inclination to oppose her wishes for my departure; however, when she was gone, Daly, who, from the volatile, gay, agreeable rattler of other days, had in the course of a few months, aye, weeks, degenerated into the most unhappy of hen-pecked husbands, entered more at large into the causes of their difficulties, which seemed to have arisen from the villainy of the once-esteemed Blinkinsop, who, in order to support himself and family in splendour and extravagance, had, in his character of trustee, not only dissipated the ready money of the deceased and deluded Mr. Haines, which Daly told me had been squandered in speculations on the stock exchange, and such like commodities, but had mortgaged the estates themselves, to an amount which exceeded their real value, having, as it was generally supposed, not satisfied himself with mortgaging them *only once*.

In fact, such a combination of crime, fraud, heartlessness, and deception, never had been before exposed to the world, as this, when all the particulars should be made known, was likely to turn out.

Mrs. M'Guffin, and her Hibernian Major, I found had taken their departure for the green island, where the Major had some property—"a mighty pretty estate;" but Daly, whose experience in the world had rendered him somewhat of an infidel in regard to Irish estates, merely quoted the Major's own description, brogue and all, at the same time giving me to understand, that, except as far as the holy estate of matrimony might benefit her, his exemplary mother-in-law was not likely to get much by the Major.

Our separation was very unlike any previous parting; instead of the joyous smile, and the hearty invitation to stop and pass a jovial hour or two, Daly's countenance indicated worry and depression of spirits, and his words were, "Gurney, I am deuced glad we have met—

there is no need of fine speeches—let me hope, however, we shall continue friends through life. I won't ask you to stop—but—come again soon."

This I promised to do, and took my departure, fully convinced of the accuracy of a description of matrimony contained in one of the proverbs in Ray's collection:

" The first month is smick-smack,
The second is hither and thither,
The third month is thwick-thwack,
And the fourth,

The deuce take them that brought thou and me together."

CHAPTER II.

As I returned to my lodgings, I could not help consoling—I believe I might almost say congratulating—myself upon the turn things had taken with regard to Emma. As for the share which Daly had in the transaction, I completely forgave him. It seemed to me, from the turn of Emma's mind—or perhaps because, not being in love, I saw more clearly—that the difference of result amounted to little more than existed between Daly's running away with her before we were married, or some other man's running away with her after. Even if she had retained the charms of person and temper, which I supposed she once really possessed, and by which I had been attracted, I should in all probability have soothed my regrets upon the principle

of M. L'Abbé Regnier, who, in his Ode to Acanthe, says—

“ Pour m'assurer le seul bien
Que l'on doit estimer au monde,
Tout ce que je n'ai pas, je le compte pour rien.”

There was another, although certainly a minor consolation, which I felt at the conclusion of my visit—not a word had been said with reference to Mrs. Fletcher Green, or my strange blunder. Every moment I dreaded lest some observation or remark should be made by Daly, leading to that most tender and delicate subject; however, it seemed to me, that he was totally eclipsed by the planet which had stricken him; all old associations appeared to be discarded; his interest in all the affairs of society, deadened, if not destroyed; and he himself a victim to a speculation, by which he was to have triumphed. This was moral justice, and yet I could not help pitying him.

As regarded myself personally, and my own immediate pursuits, I remained for nearly six months fancying myself making the most active

preparations for my voyage to India. During this period, I am sure I visited at least eight or nine different ships, some in the river, others in the docks, some regular Indiamen, others country ships, with every one of which I had some fault to find. In one, the accommodation was bad; in another, the passage-money was too high; in a third, I did not like the manners and appearance of the captain; a fourth did not carry a surgeon, which, as I never had had a day's illness in my life, was of course a matter of primary consideration. So, however, it went on; every trip I took for the purpose of surveying the different craft, serving as a business-like excuse for a quiet dinner with a friend, at the Artichoke, at Blackwall, or the never-to-be-forgotten Crown and Sceptre, at Greenwich. Still I fully believed myself going, and even went the length of making out an inventory of a stock of sea-clothing, from a shop-bill of Messrs. Favell and Bousfield, of St. Mary-Axe, a neighbourhood still interesting to me, as being the birth-place, and having been

in the days of his youth, the residence, of the once-volatile Daly.

During a portion of the time, however, I visited Brighton, which was then just becoming popular as a winter watering-place; there I fell into agreeable society, rendered more agreeable still, by the fact, that in those days there were no houses large enough to accommodate large parties at dinner. The consequence was, that our meetings were small and sociable, snug and select. The old Steyne was then the very heart of the place; a few scattered houses were to be seen beyond the battery, on the west cliff; and the crescent, which subsequently found itself one day in the middle of the town, was an isolated colony in the east, equal in rurality and seclusion to Rottendean itself.

It was during this period that, in the month of February, I fell in with one of those illustrious citizens, into whose society I had been unworthily admitted during my civic evolutions, and whom I found established on what was then considered a somewhat exposed part of the cliff,

near the end of Ship-street. He did me the honour, not only to recognize me as having been one of his visitors at the mansion house, but rather to hunt me out, or, I might say, hunt me down, until at last he made up his mind to the resolution of inviting me to dine with him and his family.

“Mr. Gurney,” said he, “I have the pleasure to remember you in my mayoralty last year, having been presented to me by my worthy friend, Alderman Bucklesbury, and I am sure, Mrs. Firkins has a strong feeling of your great kindness to us, in coming in a friendly way to us when we were at the Mansion House; perhaps you will do us the favour to eat your mutton at number nine to-morrow—we dine at five—it gets dark about five now, and I see no use in wasting one’s time and appetite for a later hour.”

I bowed assent, and felt extremely obliged by the invitation, and accordingly was punctiliously punctual. It blew what Mrs. Firkins called a “harrico,” and the shining bow windows of Brighton houses in those days were not particu-

larly well calculated to stand a gale ; however, we did remarkably well, and had a very pleasant day until the ladies retired, when I found myself *tête-à-tête* with the alderman, who was evidently bursting with a grievance.

The commonest tact in the world puts a man *au fait* under such circumstances: he was actually boiling with indignation at something that had occurred, and I felt quite assured, being the only stranger present, that my bosom was destined to be the depository of his calamity the moment the departure of the ladies permitted the exudation of his wretchedness. Sure enough, no sooner had the door been closed upon the charmers and cheerers of our party, than Firkins, drawing his chair to the fire, and motioning to me to do the same, began the detail of his miseries ; which, however, although I noted it down as soon as I got home, was so beautifully mingled with good feeling, that I could not bring myself to smile at what in particular parts might have been considered by some fanciful persons absolutely ludicrous.

“Fill your glass, Mr. Gurney,” said Alderman Firkins, “I want your advice—although I *do* think I have made up my mind—still I know my brother Alderman, Bucklesbury, has a very high opinion of your judgment; and even if you do not take upon you to give me council, there is a pleasure in just, you know, telling one’s sorrows out of one’s own family.”

“Sorrows, Sir!” said I; “with such a family as your’s, with health and wealth, and all the other enjoyments of this sublunary world, what sorrows can you have?”

“A sort of proud sorrow,” said Firkins, “of which I am, and am not ashamed—will you listen to me while I tell you my history. *You* drink claret, *I* drink port; whenever you find yourself or the narrative dry, help yourself—but I should like to tell you, if I might, how I am placed.”

“Nothing could give me greater pleasure,” said I.—

“You don’t care about tea?” said Firkins.

“Never did!” said I.

“Well, then,” said Firkins, “we will just send

up to the women not to wait, which is I take to be the genteelest possible way of telling them to go to bed—don't you twig?"

"I do," said I, and bowed respectfully.

"That," said Firkins, "is what a gentleman might call prime, without being thought vulgar."

I bowed again, not perhaps duly appreciating my worthy friend's notion of "gentility." Having rung the bell, and delivered his order, the alderman resumed.

"What I want, Sir," continued mine host, "is just a little patience, and you shall judge. Now, fill your glass, and don't wait for me to tell you to do so whenever it is empty."

"Your narrative shall not be broken in upon by me," said I.

"You are right, Mr. Gurney," replied mine host; "as you drink claret and I drink port, we need not interfere with each other. You know what the proverb says—

• Jack Sprat, loved no fat,
His wife she loved no lean,
And so, betwixt them both,
They licked the platter clean.'

We'll finish our bottles, I warrant, and all without any trouble whatsoever — so now listen to me.”—

I drew my chair close to the fire, and he began.

“ You know, Mr. Gurney, I have been Sheriff — I *have been* Lord Mayor; and the three great eras of my existence were the year of my shrievalty, the year of my mayoralty, and the present year—which is the year after it. Until I had passed through this ordeal, I had no conception of the extremes of happiness and wretchedness, to which the same human being may be carried. Nor did I ever believe that society presented to its members an eminence so exalted as that which I once touched, or imagine a fall so great as that which I have experienced *.”

* It ought to be recollected, that Mr. Firkins made this remark at least five years before Buonaparte had been toppled from his imperial mayoralty in France. It is right to mention this, lest an imputation should rest upon the worthy Alderman, either of ignorance of history, or a desire to elevate himself above one of the most extraordinary adventurers the world ever produced. ED.

I bowed, and sipped my wine.

“ I came,” continued the worthy Alderman, “ from that place to which persons of bad character are said to be sent; but which, if I know anything of it, will every year, one after another, raise its own character in the estimation of the country—Coventry, Sir; a place proverbially genteel, Mr. Gurney, even in the days of Sir John Falstaff, who would not be seen marching through it with a ragged regiment, Sir,—that was the place where I was born, and my father, Sir, in that place many years—half a century, I believe, man and boy, ’prentice and master—contributed his share to the success of parliamentary candidates, the happiness of new married couples, and even the gratification of ambition, and wavering courtiers, by taking an active part—not in politics, Sir, but in the manufacture of ribands for election cockades, for wedding favours; for cordons—as they call them—you know what I mean—the things they wear over their shoulders with the Garter, Bath, Thistle, and St. Patrick; but, Sir, in spite of

weddings, elections, and elevations, trade failed, and my poor father failed too—he became bankrupt, but, unlike his betters, without any consequent advantage to himself; and I, at fifteen years of age, was thrown upon the world, with nothing but a good constitution, a very moderate education, and fifteen shillings and eleven-pence three farthings in my pocket.”

The Alderman paused for breath, and I perfectly recollected the conversation which had passed at Hull’s cottage, with regard to his social expedition with the friend of his bosom, Bucklesbury, and thence deduced his desire to set himself right with a man whom he believed to be the favourite of that important personage: the difference in their mode of travelling, and in the results of their speculations, having been most forcibly explained by my other worthy and worshipful friend.

“With those qualifications,” continued Firkins, “I started from my native town, intending to make a pedestrian excursion; but my constitution not being so strong, or my feet not being so

hard as our worthy friend Bucklesbury's, I took to the waggon, walking sometimes for recreation, but sleeping comfortably under the tilt at nights, and on the fourth evening reached the metropolis, thanks to the waggoner's moderation, with no less a sum left in my pocket, than nine shillings and seven-pence."

I really delighted to hear of this progress—it at once interested and edified me.

"The bells of one of the churches in the city were merrily ringing as I descended the heights of Islington; and were it not that Firkins never could jingle into anything very harmonious, I have no doubt that I, like my great predecessor, Whittington,—you have heard his story, Mr. G.?"

I nodded, "Yes."

"I," continued Firkins, "might have heard in that peal a prediction of my future dignity.—I did not—and wearied with my journey, took up my lodging at a very humble house near Smithfield, to which the waggoner recommended me with an assurance of good treat-

ment. Well, Sir," said Firkins, "I don't want to bore you with my own praises, or make up a moral from my own history; neither shall I dilate upon the good policy of honesty, or the advantages of temperance and perseverance, by which I worked my way upwards, until after meriting the confidence of an excellent master, I found myself enjoying it fully. He took me into his house upon my poor father's own recommendation; I served him faithfully; he trusted me; and as I grew into knowledge I did him good. I succeeded to his business at his death, having several years before, with his sanction, married a young and deserving woman about my own age, of whose prudence and skill in household matters I long had a daily experience. She was his only female servant, Mr. Gurney, and while she was that, why of course she had but few opportunities of showing her intellectual qualities; but she had sound good sense, Mr. Gurney; and when that woman rose in the world, and felt the cheering warmth of prosperity, her mind, Sir, like a balloon

rising into regions where the bright sun beams on it, expanded, Sir,—dilated, Sir,—and she became, as, thank God, she remains, the kind, unsophisticated partner of my pleasures and my sorrows. Mr. Gurney, Mr. Gurney, that good, excellent woman, humble as she was, has been the friend of my life—the guiding star of my destinies.”

The Alderman grew eloquent in his praises; but they came from the heart, and I felt delighted at his enthusiasm.

“Providence, Sir,” continued the Alderman, “blessed my efforts, and increased my means;—from a retail dabbler in dribblets, I became a merchant—a wholesale trafficker—exactly like our good friend Hull—in everything, from barrels of gunpowder down to a pickled herring. In the civic acceptation of the word, I am a merchant;—amongst the vulgar, I am called a dry-salter. I accumulated wealth;—with my fortune, also grew my family, and one male Firkins, and four female ditto, as you see,—or may see, if you come to us as often as I wish,—grace my

board at least once in every week. I hold it an article of faith to have a sirloin of beef upon my table on Sunday, and when I am in London, and within reach of them, all my children round me to partake of it. Mr. Gurney, this may be prejudice ;—no matter, so long as the dear old man could afford it, my poor father did the same before me. I plead that precedent, Mr. Gurney, and am not ashamed of the custom.

“Passing over all the little steps of my life—removals from one house to another—the enlargement of *this* warehouse, the rebuilding of *that*—the anxiety of a canvass for common-councilman—activity in the company of which I am a liveryman, inquests, and vestries, and ward meetings, and all the other pleasing toils to which an active citizen is subject, let me come, Mr. Gurney, at once to the first marked epoch of my life.”

“If you please,” said I, filling my glass again.

“Sir,” said the Alderman, “the announcement of my nomination and election, as one of the sheriffs of London and Middlesex, filled Mrs.

Firkins with delight; and when I took my children to Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, to look at the gay chariot brushing up for me, I do honestly confess, that I did feel proud and happy to be able to show my dear little ones the arms of the city of London,—those of the Spectacle-makers' Company,—and those of the Firkins's—recently found at a comparatively trifling expense,—all figuring upon the same pannels. I do assure *you*, Mr. Gurney, they looked magnificent upon the pea-green ground; and the wheels 'crimson picked out white,' seemed so chaste, and the hammer-cloth, and the fringe, and the festoons, and the Firkins' crest—"a Firkin, Or,"—as they call it, did look so rich, and the silk linings, and the white tassels, and the squabs, and the yellow cushions, and the crimson carpet, looked so comfortable, that, as I stood measuring it all, as it were, with my eye, I said to myself, what have I done to deserve it?—oh, that my dear father were alive to see his poor boy Jack going down to Westminster in a carriage like this, to see sticks chop-

ped and hob-nails counted. The children were like mad things; and in the afternoon, when I put on my first brown court suit, lined, like my chariot, with white silk, and fitted up with cut steel buttons—just to see the effect by candle-light, it all seemed like a dream. The sword, which I tried on every night, for half an hour, after I went up to bed, in order to practise walking in it, was very inconvenient at first; but use is second nature, and so by rehearsing, as the players say, I made myself what I call perfectly perfect before the auspicious day, when sheriffs flourish and geese prevail—the twenty-ninth of September.

“The next twelve months passed very delightfully; for, independent of the *positive* honour with which I was invested, I had the mayoralty in *prospectû*, having attained my aldermanic gown by a vast majority the preceding year; and as I used, during the sessions, to sit in my box at the Old Bailey, with my bag at my back, and my bunch of flowers on my book, my thoughts were wholly directed to one

object of contemplation. Culprits stood trembling to hear the verdict of a jury;—convicts knelt to receive the sentence of the judge;—but, Mr. Gurney, these things passed by me like a breath of air, as I sat watching the Lord Mayor seated in the centre of the bench, with the sword of justice stuck up in a goblet, over his head.—There, thought I, if I live three years, shall *I* sit.

“Even as it was, I admit it was extremely pleasant. I had to go to the House of Commons with a petition, and to court with an address—trying situations for a Firkins. However, the courtesy of the Speaker, and the very little notice taken of us by the members, put me quite at ease at Westminster, and the urbanity of the monarch on his throne made me equally comfortable at St. James’s. Still, you see, my dear Sir, I was but a secondary personage—or, rather, one of two personages—the chief of bailiffs, and principal Jack Ketch. There *was* a step to gain; and, as I often mentioned in confidence to Mrs. F., I was sure

my heart would never be still until I was perched upon the pinnacle.

“Time flies, Mr. Gurney,” continued the Alderman, “and at length the moment came. Guildhall crowded to excess—the hustings thronged—the names of the aldermen are read—cheers rend the air—the worshipful court retire—they return—their choice is announced to the people—it has fallen upon John Ebenezer Firkins, Esq., citizen and Spectacle-maker—a sudden shout is heard—“Firkins for ever!” resounds. The whole assembly vanishes from my sight—I perceive nothing but a mighty moving mass. I come forward—am invested with the chain—I bow—make a speech—tumble over the train of the Recorder, and tread upon the tenderest of the ten toes of Mr. Deputy Pod—leave the Hall in ecstasy, and am driven home to Mrs. Firkins, in a state of mind not to be described.

“From that moment, Sir, it appeared to me that time flew no more; every day until the eighth of November seemed to me as long as a week. I existed in a state of perpetual ner-

vousness, lest something,—what, I could not even surmise,—should happen, to prevent the consummation of all my earthly hopes. At last the moment came in which it *did* seem certain that I *should* be Lord Mayor of London. Sir, I was sworn in—the civic insignia were delivered to me—I returned them to the proper officers—my chaplain was near me—the esquires of my household were behind me: the thing was done. Never shall I forget the tingling sensation in my ears, when I was first called ‘My Lord.’ I even doubted if it were addressed to me, and hesitated to answer; but it *was* so. The reign of splendour had begun; and, after going through the usual ceremonies, and eating the accustomed dinner, I got home, and retired to bed as early as possible, in order to be fresh for the delightful fatigues of the ensuing day.

“If I said I slept, Mr. Gurney,” continued Firkins, “I should tell a fib—how was it to be expected? Some part of the night I was in consultation with my dear Sarah, upon the different arrangements which were to be made;

settling about the girls—their places at the dinner—their partners at the ball. The wind whistling down the chimney sounded to my ears like the shouts of the people; the cocks crowing in the back yard, I took for trumpets announcing my approach; and the ordinary, incidental noises about the house, I fancied the pop-guns at Stangate, proclaiming my disembarkation at Westminster. Thus, Sir, I tossed and tumbled, until the long-wished-for day dawned; and as soon as the glimmering of light, which at eight o'clock, in November, in London, is not much, warned me of its arrival, I jumped out of bed, anxious to realize the visions of the night.

“ I was not long a-washing: I seldom am. I shaved as quick as I could, and proceeded to dress; but just as I was settling myself comfortably into my beautiful brown broad-cloth inexpressibles, crack went something, and I discovered a seam ripped to the extent of half a foot. Had it been consistent with the dignity of a Lord Mayor to swear, I should, I really believe,

at that moment, have anathematized the offending tailor ; as it was, what was to be done ? I heard trumpets in earnest—carriages drawing up, and setting down—sheriffs and chaplain, and train-bearer, and mace-bearer, and sword-bearer — Messrs. Mace, Sword, and Train, water-bailiffs, remembrancers, Mr. Common Hunt ; Mr. Town Clerk, Mr. Deputy Town Clerk, and Mr. Town-Crier, all bustling about, the bells ringing, and *I* late, with a hole in my inexpressibles. My conduct upon that occasion, Sir, proved to me, more than any event which had previously occurred in my life, the extraordinary power of the human mind ; nothing but promptitude and decision could have served me in so trying a situation. The course to be pursued came into my head as if by inspiration. I called my wife's maid,—a kind, intelligent, civil, and obliging creature, as ever drew breath—lives with us still—I explained my misfortune—she came to my assistance—and in less than ten minutes her activity, wonderfully exerted in the midst of the confusion, repaired the injury, and turned

me out, fit to be seen by the whole population of the greatest city in the universe.

“When I was finally dressed, I tapped at Mrs. Firkins’s door, went in, and asked her if she thought I should do. The dear soul, after settling my point lace frill (which she had been good enough to pick off her own shrievalty petticoat on purpose), and putting my bag straight, gave me the sweetest salute imaginable, at the same time saying, ‘I wish your Lordship health and happiness.’

“‘Sally,’ said I, ‘your Ladyship is an angel.’ On the landing-place were my dear daughters, all in different stages of dressing for the procession. I kissed them all in turn, and descended the stairs, to begin the auspicious day, on which I reached the apex of my greatness. I never shall forget the bows, the civilities, the congratulations, with which I was received as I entered upon the scene of action. The sheriff’s bending before me—the recorder smiling—the common sergeant at my feet: the pageant was very delightful. And then, when all the necessary

preliminaries had been performed, I stepped into that glazed and gilded house upon wheels, called the state coach, and saw my sword-bearer pop himself into one of the boots, with the sword of *my* state in his hands, I was lost in ecstasy. I threw myself back upon the seat of the vehicle, with all possible dignity, but not without damage; for, in my efforts at ease and elegance, I snapped off the cut steel hilt of my own rapier, by accidentally bumping the whole weight of my body right, or rather wrong, directly upon the top of it.

“But, Sir,” continued Firkins, “what was a sword-hilt and a bruise to me—pride knows no pain—I felt none—I was *the* Lord Mayor, the greatest man in the greatest city of the greatest nation in the world. The people realized my expectation; and “Bravo! Firkins,” and “Firkins for ever!” resounded again and again, as we proceeded slowly and majestically towards the river, through a fog which prevented our being advantageously seen, and which got down the throat of Mr. Sword, who was a little trou-

bled with asthma, and who coughed incessantly during our progress, much to my annoyance, not to speak of the ungraceful movements, which his convulsive barkings gave to the red velvet scabbard of the honourable glaive, as it stuck out of the coach window.

“ We reached the water-side—we embarked in *my* barge—a new scene of splendour awaited me: guns, flags, banners, in short, everything that taste and fancy could suggest, or a water-bailiff provide were awaiting me. In the gilded bark was a cold collation. I ate, or tried to eat, but I tasted nothing. Fowls, patés, game, beef, ham—all had the same flavour; champagne, hock, and Madeira, were all alike to me. ‘ Lord Mayor’ was all I saw, all I heard, all I swallowed; everything was pervaded and absorbed by the one captivating word; and the repeated appeals to ‘ My Lordship’ were sweeter than nectar.

“ Well, Sir,” said the alderman, “ at Westminster I was presented and received; and what do you think I then did—I, John Ebenezer Firkins, of Coventry? I—desired the Recorder

to invite the Judges to dine with me at the Guildhall!—I, Mr. Gurney, who remember when two of the oldest and most innocent of the twelve, came the circuit, trembling at the very sight of them, and believing them some extraordinary creatures, upon whom all the hair and fur, that I saw, grew naturally; I—not only asked these formidable beings to dine with me, but, as if I thought it beneath my dignity to do so in my own proper person, actually deputed a judge of my own to do it for me. I never shall forget their Lordships' bows in return; mandarins on a mantel-piece are fools to them.

“Then the return, Sir. We re-embarked; and then, in reality, did I hear the guns at Stangate saluting me. I stood it like a man, although I have always a fear of accidents from the wadding. The tide was with us; we soon reached Blackfriars' bridge; we landed once more in the sphere of my greatness. At the corner of Fleet-street was the Lady Mayoress, waiting for the procession; there she was, Sally Firkins — my own Sally — (her maiden name, Mr.

Gurney, was Snob)—with a plume of feathers that half filled the coach, and young Sally, and Jenny, and Maria, all crammed in the front seat, with their backs to *my* horses, which were pawing the mud, and snorting, and smoking like steam engines, with nostrils like safety-valves; not to speak of four of my footmen hanging behind the carriage, like bees in a swarm. There had not been so much riband in my family since my poor father's failure at Coventry; and yet, Mr. Gurney, how often, over and over again, although the poor old man had been dead more than twenty years, did I during that morning, in the midst of my splendour, think of *him*, and wish to my heart that he could see me in my greatness; even in the midst of my triumph, I seemed to defer to my good, kind parent—in heaven as I hope and trust—as if I were anxious for *his* judgment, and *his* opinion, as to how I should perform the manifold arduous duties of the day."

I saw a tear standing in my friend's eye, as these words came from his heart; and I said to

myself, this shall not be a bad man, let them say what they may.

“ Well, Sir,” continued he, after blowing his nose sonorously, “ up Ludgate-hill we went—the fog grew thicker and thicker—but then the beautiful women at the windows,—those high up could only just see my knees, and the paste buckles in my shoes. This I regretted, but every now and then I bowed condescendingly to the people, in order to show my courtesy, and my chain and collar, which I had discovered during the morning shone the brighter for being shaken. But else I maintained a proper dignity throughout my progress; and, although I said an occasional word or two to my chaplain, and smiled occasionally at Mr. Water-bailiff, I took no more notice of Mr. Sword, and Mr. Mace, than I should have taken of Gog and Magog.

“ At length we reached Guildhall. As I crossed that beautiful building, lighted brilliantly, and filled with splendidly dressed company, and heard the deafening shouts which pealed through its roof as I entered it, I felt a

good deal flurried. I retired to a private room, adjusted my dress, shook out my frill, rubbed up my chain and collar, and prepared to receive my guests. They came, and shall I ever forget it? Dinner was announced; the bands played “Oh! the roast beef of Old England;” onwards we went; a prince of the blood—of the blood royal of my own country—led out Sally—my own Sally—the Lady Mayoress; the Lord Chancellor handed out young Sally—I saw it done—I thought I should have fainted; the Prime minister took Maria; the Lord Privy Seal gave his arm to Jenny; and Mrs. Snob, my wife’s mother—a wonderful woman at her age, bating her corpulency, Mr. Gurney—was escorted to table by the Right Honourable the Lord Chief Justice of the King’s Bench, in his full robes and collar of SS. Oh, if my poor father could but have seen that!

“At the ball, my eldest girl danced with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and found him very chatty, though a bit of a “swell”: Maria danced with the Lord Privy Seal; and my

youngest with a very handsome man, who wore a riband and star, but who he was, we none of us could ever find out ; no matter—never did I see such a day, although it was but the first of three hundred and sixty-five splendid visions.

“ It would take till twelve o’clock at night, Mr. Gurney,” said Firkins, “ to expatiate in detail upon all the pleasures of this happy year, thus auspiciously begun. Each month brought its fresh pleasures ; each week its new amusements ; each day its festival. Public meetings, under the sanction of the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor ; concerts and balls, under the patronage of the Lady Mayoress. Then came Easter, and its dinner—Blue-coat boys and buns ; then to St. Paul’s one Sunday, and to some other church another Sunday. And then came summer ; and then there was swan-hopping *up* the river, and white-baiting *down* the river, Crown and Sceptre below, navigation barge above ; music, flags, streamers, guns, and company. Turtle every day in the week ; peas a pound per pint, and grapes a guinea a pound ;

not to speak of dabbling in rose-water, served in gold, nor the loving cup, nor the esquires of my household, all in full dress at my elbow.

“ The days which before had seemed weeks, were now turned to minutes ; scarcely had I swallowed my breakfast, when I was in the justice-room ; and before I had mittimused half a dozen paupers for begging about the streets, luncheon was ready ; this hardly over, in comes a despatch or a deputation ; and so on, till dinner, which was barely ended before supper was announced. We all became delighted with the Mansion-House. My girls grew graceful by the new confidence their high station gave them ; Maria refused a good offer, because her lover had an ugly name ; and my dearest Sarah was absolutely persecuted by a Sir Patrick O'Donahoo, who had what is called the run of the house, and who scarcely ever dined out of it during my mayoralty, whether I was at home or not. What did it matter ? there was plenty to eat and drink ; the money must be spent, and the victuals cooked ; and so as we made our-

selves happy, it was of no great consequence having one or two more or less at table. We got used to the place, the establishment had got used to us; we became, in fact, easy in our dignity, and happy in our state, when, oh! Mr. Gurney, the ninth of another November came—the anniversary of my exaltation—the conclusion of my reign.

“ Again, Sir, did we go to Guildhall; again were we toasted and addressed; again we were handed in and led out; the girls again flirted with cabinet ministers, and danced with ambassadors; and at two o’clock in the morning drove home from the scene of gaiety, to our old residence in Budge-row, Walbrook. Never in this world did pickled herrings and turpentine smell so powerfully, as when we entered the house upon that occasion; and although my wife and the young ones stuck to the drinkables at Guildhall as long as was decent, in order to keep up their spirits, their natural feelings would have way, and a sort of shuddering disgust seemed to fill all their minds on their return home. The pas-

sage looked so narrow, the drawing-room looked so small, the staircase was so dark, and the ceilings were so low. However, being tired, we all slept well ; at least I did; for I was in no humour to talk ; and the only topic I could think upon, before I dropped off, was a calculation of the amount of expenses which I had incurred during the just-expired year of my magnificence.

“ In the morning we assembled at breakfast ; a note which had arrived by the twopenny post, lay on the table : it was addressed, ‘ Mrs. Firkins, Budge-row, Walbrook.’ The girls, one after another, took it up, read the undignified superscription, and laid it down again. My old and excellent friend, Bucklesbury, called to inquire after us. What were his first words ? they *were* the first I had heard from a stranger since my change : ‘ Well, Firkins, how are you, old boy ? done up, eh ?’

“ Firkins—old boy—no deference, no respect, no ‘ My Lord, I hope your Lordship passed a comfortable night ; and how is her Ladyship, and your Lordship’s amiable daughters ?’ not a

bit of it—‘How’s Missis F. and the *gals*?’” There was nothing in this; it was quite natural—all as it *had* been—all as it must be—all as it should be; but how very unlike what it *was*, only one day before. The very servants themselves, who, when amidst the strapping, state-fed, lace-loaded lacqueys of the Mansion-House (transferred, with the chairs and tables, from one Lord Mayor to another), dared not speak, nor look, nor say their lives were their own, strutted about, and banged the doors, and talked of their ‘Missis,’ as if she had been an apple-woman.

“So much for domestic matters.—I went out—I was shoved about in Cheapside, in the most remorseless manner, by the money-hunting crowd; my right eye had the narrowest possible escape of being poked out by the tray of a brawny butcher boy, who, when I civilly remonstrated, turned round and said, ‘Vy, I say, who are you I vonder, as is so partiklar about your *hye-sight*?’ I felt an involuntary shudder. ‘Who am I?—to-day,’ thought I, ‘I *am* John Ebenezer Firkins—two days ago, I *was* Lord

Mayor of London ;'—and so the rencontre ended, evidently in favour of the butcher. It was, however, too much for me. I admit the weakness; but the effect of contrast was too powerful—the change was too sudden—and here we are, Mr. Gurney, as you see us."

"And right glad I am to see you," said I, "in the enjoyment of health and happiness."

"We enjoy neither in reality," said Firkins; "our mortifications have followed us here. My wife and girls live in a sort of seclusion, and do little else than sit at the windows, and sigh at the sea. They cannot bear to go out; the indifference of their inferiors mortifies them, and the familiarity of their equals disgusts them. Do what I can with them, they feel themselves neglected, and cut, by people with whom they have lived, for the last twelve months, as acquaintance. Why, there are now not less than four men in this place, who call me Jack—plain Jack, Mr. Gurney,—and that out of chaises or in the libraries; and one chooses, by way of making himself particularly agreeable, to address

me by the still more familiar appellation of Jacky. Why, Sir, it is not more than three days ago, that an overgrown tallow-chandler, who is down here dipping his daughters, met us on the Steyne, and stopped our party, to mention ‘as how he thought he owed me for two barrels of coal tar, for doing over his pig-styes.’ Sir, I give you my word, when we first came, we drove to the Castle Inn; in the passage, stood one of his Majesty’s ministers, speaking to his lady,—and *my* girls, Maria and Jane, passed as close to him as I am to you; and although he had handed one of them to dinner, and danced with another at night, he appeared entirely to have forgotten both, and took no more notice of them than if they had been nobody at all.”

“It is quite possible, in the innumerable engagements of a man in his station,” said I, “that his Lordship might really have forgotten your daughter.”

“Not a bit of it,” said Firkins, who appeared perfectly determined not to be consoled: “no—the minute they were passed, he whispered

something to the lady, who immediately exclaimed, ‘No, you don’t mean you ever did,’ and burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. And see the consequence of all this:—Maria, who danced with the Lord Privy Seal, and was called an angel by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, — who refused a good match, because the man had an ugly name, is going to be married to Lieutenant Stodge, on the half-pay of the royal marines. Sir Patrick O’Donahoo is gone to join the army in Spain, and has left poor Jenny in despair; and, to crown all, Sally is turning methodist. I cannot help it, Mr. Gurney, but the females of my family feel it so deeply, and that it infects me—and that’s where it is. I admit my tumble was unpleasant, but it has broken no bones. I have toiled long, and laboured hard. I am conscious of having done my duty, and Providence has blessed my exertions; and what I say to the girls is, that if the sudden change in our station puts us out so much, they must lay the blame upon me, for having aspired to honours above

our own sphere, which I knew were to be only temporary. However, my ambition was not dishonourable, nor did I disgrace the station while I filled it;—besides which, Mr. Gurney, after all, I *am* an alderman. That's the way I argue; but they won't hear reason. For the rest, Mr. Gurney, you are a man of the world, and will, I am sure, make allowances for the frailty of human nature."

So far from making allowances, I could not but regard my friend, the alderman, with respect and almost affection. There seemed such a perfect naturalness—if I may use the word—about him; and as I knew his politics to be constitutional, and his principles unimpeachable, I could not but wonder how he had contrived to remain popular during his mayoralty, or have escaped insults and outrages for doing his duty honestly, fearlessly, and conscientiously.

"And now, Mr. Gurney," said Firkins, "what would you advise me to do?"

"Advise you, Sir," said I, "why, if you really mean to take council from me, I would

say, stay here as long as you like, and when you choose to return home, go. A man, with *your* heart and feelings, must ensure respect wherever he is found. The friends who have always esteemed you, will esteem you still. Think no more of the fleeting gaiety, necessary to the maintenance of a high office, but perfectly inconsistent with the quiet enjoyments of private life; recollect, without soreness, that the great men of whose coldness or forgetfulness your family complain, paid their respects rather to that office, which it is their duty, as well as interest, to uphold, than to the individual, of whom, whatever might be their regard for his mercantile character, they personally knew nothing but as the chief magistrate of the city. The meanest, basest, and most disreputable men, that ever attained, by rotation, to the civic honours which so well became *you*, have been equally complimented and caressed, according to the political feelings of the Government of the time;—laugh at all that. The public relations between you and the government have ceased—forget it all.

With a family like your's, I would defy sorrow and anxiety, and if your eldest daughter love Lieutenant Stodge, why let her marry him ; and don't let Jenny waste herself in despair for a runaway Irish knight, or Sally die for love of an anonymous youth in a star and riband. You have all the materials for happiness in your hands ;—use them, my dear Sir, and believe this to be true, that however fickle and evanescent the smiles of rank and greatness may be, the fruits of goodness and virtue are permanent and lasting.”

Firkins took me by the hand, and seemed quite overpowered by his feelings. I could not help marvelling to myself at the strange position in which I had been placed—giving advice, at my age, to an ex-chief magistrate of London, who had passed the chair, and stood above the Recorder. I did, however, what I thought was right, and spoke the sincere feelings of my heart. As usual with *me*, I found, at the conclusion of the narration, the candles short, and the bottles empty. Resolved to show no undue preference in favour of the sherry and

Madeira, Firkins and I concluded by finishing them off, and I took my departure, having obtained another strong and striking lesson upon the peculiarities of our nature.

The reader having now been put in possession of Mr. Gurney's report of Mr. Firkins' grievances, as detailed by that worthy and never to be sufficiently lamented Alderman—(for, alas! he was many years since gathered to his fathers)—the editor of these memoirs, anxious to do justice to Mr. Firkins's feelings, and to Mr. Gurney's accuracy in recording them, considers that he cannot do more for the establishment of the sincerity of one party, and the correctness of the other, than may be done by submitting a few extracts from an authentic work, published many years subsequent to the period to which Mr. Gurney refers, giving an account of the journey of Lord Mayor Venables to Oxford, written and published at the desire of his Lordship, and his

companions in that enterprize, by his Lordship's chaplain. As the romance of real life is *said* to be infinitely more romantic than that of fiction, so the details of dignity, splendour, and magnificence, ably and carefully written by the Rev. Gentleman, by which the expedition of Alderman Venables was distinguished, very much transcend the description given by our respected acquaintance Firkins, to my much regretted friend, Gurney. The extracts must be brief—but I am convinced they will be highly satisfactory.

The first quotation I shall make from the reverend author's book, is the description of the departure of the Lord Mayor from the Mansion House. It is headed "Tuesday," and begins at page 11.

"On the morning of the 25th (July), the Lord Mayor, *accompanied* by the Lady Mayoress, and *attended* by the chaplain, left the Mansion House soon after eight o'clock.

"The *private state* carriage," (I ought to observe, the *italics* are mine) "*had driven* to the door

at half-past seven," (which, by the way, as an act of volition upon the part of the private state coach, was extremely attentive.) "The coachman's *countenance was reserved and thoughtful*; indicating full consciousness of the test by which his *equestrian* skill would this day be tried, in having the undivided charge of *four high spirited and stately horses, a circumstance somewhat unusual*: for in the Lord Mayor's carriage, a postillion usually *guides the first pair of horses*,"—i. e. the postillion in the carriage guides the leaders, which are the farthest removed from it.

"These fine animals," says the reverend author, "were in admirable condition for the journey—having been allowed a previous day of unbroken rest; they were quite impatient of delay, and chafed and champed *exceedingly*, on the bits, by which their impetuosity was restrained."

"The *murmur of expectation* which had lasted for more than half an hour amongst the crowd who had gathered around the carriage, was at length *hushed*, by—the opening of the hall door.

The Lord Mayor had been filling up this interval" (the door?) "with instructions to the *femme de ménage* and other household officers who were to be left in residence, to attend with their wonted fidelity and diligence to their respective departments of service during his absence, and now appeared at the door. His Lordship was *accompanied* by the Lady Mayoress, and *followed* by the chaplain.

"As soon as the female attendant of the Lady Mayoress had taken her seat, dressed with *becoming* neatness, at the side of the *well-looking* coachman, the carriage drove away: not, however, with that violent and extreme rapidity which rather astounds than gratifies the beholders: but at that *steady and majestic* pace which is always an indication of REAL GREATNESS."—p. 12.

The reverend gentleman describes this majestic progress through London to Cranford Bridge; a powder mill at Hounslow is blown up on the way; but at Cranford Bridge, "just thirteen miles from London," the Lord Mayor

staid only long enough to change horses—"for his Lordship intending to travel post from Cranford Bridge to Oxford, his own *fine* horses were, after a proper interval of rest, to return to town under the coachman's care."

"These noble animals, however, seemed scarcely to need the rest which their master's"—*job*—"kindness now allotted them, for though they had drawn a somewhat heavy carriage a distance of *nearly seventeen miles*, yet they appeared as *full of life* as ever; arching their stately necks, and dashing in all directions the white foam from their mouths, as if they were displeased that they were to go no further."—p. 16.

"Just as the carriage was about to drive away" (more volition,) "Mr. Alderman Magnay, accompanied by his lady and daughter, arrived in a post-chaise. After an interchange of salutations, the Lady Mayoress, observing that they must be somewhat crowded in the chaise, invited Miss Magnay to take the fourth seat which had yet been vacant in the carriage; *as*

the day was beginning to be warm, this courteous offer of her Ladyship was readily accepted."

Here is a perfect justification of Firkins's regrets at his fall,—the unhappy trio, jammed in the *po chay*, had been the year before in precisely the same elevated position which their illustrious friends then occupied; and if the courteous Lady Mayoress the year before that, had been screwed up with her husband and daughter in a *po chay* also, then Mrs. Magnay would have been the courteous Lady Mayoress, to have relieved the Venableses. I must, however, think that the reverend gentleman's reason for Miss Magnay's ready acceptance of the courteous offer, does her an injustice. By his account, she readily got out of the family jam, not because she duly appreciated the grace and favour of the Lady Mayoress, but because "the day was beginning to be warm."

The journey to Oxford was all safely completed, and after seventy-six pages of matter, equally illustrative of Firkins's feelings, we come at p. 77, to this description of the rapture and

delight of the people of Oxfordshire, under the exciting circumstances of the Lord Mayor's return down the river towards London.

“ The crowds of people—men, women, and children, who had accompanied the barge from Oxford, were continually *succeeded* by fresh *reinforcements* from every town and village that is skirted by the river. Distant shouts and acclamations perpetually re-echoed from field to field, as the various rustic parties with their fresh and blooming faces, were seen hurrying forth from their cottages and gardens ; climbing trees, struggling through copses, and traversing thickets, to make their shortest way to the water side. *Handfuls of halfpence were scattered* to the children as they kept pace with the city barge, and Mr. Alderman Atkins, who assisted the Lord Mayor in the distribution, seemed to enter with more than common pleasure into the enjoyment of the little children. It was gratifying to *see the absence* of selfish feeling manifested by some of the elder boys, who, forgetful of them-

selves, collected for the younger girls.”—pp. 77, 78.

The last bit for which I have room, is of the more convincing and powerfully descriptive cast, than any thing I have yet advanced in favour of my poor friend Gurney’s estimation of Firkins’s dismay at his fall. The scene is near Caversham, where crowds of “spectators, some on foot, some on horseback, and *some* in equipages of *every* kind” were collected to see the barges pass.

“Among the equestrians,” says the author, “two are deserving that their looks and equipments should be alluded to in more than general terms. The animals they bestrode, were a couple of broken down ponies, gaunt and rusty, who had possibly once seen better days. The men themselves were not unsuitable figures to such a pair of steeds. They rode with short stirrups, that brought their knees almost under cover of the shaggy manes that overspread the ewe necks of the poor creatures; and carried

their short thick sticks *perpendicular in their hands.*"

This sounds like an account in one of the innumerable books of travels in the interior of Africa, rather than a description of a couple of natives of Berkshire, within five-and-thirty miles of Hyde Park Corner; however, "so mightily pleased was the Lord Mayor with their uncouth and ludicrous appearance, that he *hailed* one of them, and asked him to be the bearer of a message to Reading, *touching his Lordship's carriage.* *The fellow seemed to feel as he never felt before.* *An honour was about to be conferred upon him alone, to be the *avant courier* of—the LORD MAYOR OF LONDON,* above and beyond all the other riders, drivers, and walkers, of whatever quality and degree, who had thronged in view of the civic party; and no sooner had his Lordship flung him a piece of money, and told him to 'make haste to the Bear Inn at Reading, and order the Lord Mayor's carriage to meet the barge at Caversham Bridge,' than the fellow instantly belaboured the starveling

ribs of the poor animal that carried him with kicks and cudgel, *who* in a moment dashed briskly forward, snuffling and snorting, across the fields. In the eagerness of his flight, the doughty messenger had much ado to keep his seat; he sometimes slipped on one side of the saddle, and sometimes on the other, while the skirts of his unbuttoned coat fluttered far out behind him." pp. 81, 82.

All this evidence from the pen of a worthy divine, will, I am sure, convince the most sceptical reader of the fidelity with which my late friend repeated the regrets and lamentations of our friends in Budge Row, after their involuntary abdication. Every page of the account of that memorable journey and voyage teems with gem-like illustrations of a similar character; and I regret that my duty, as editor of the Gurney papers, does not permit me to draw more largely on its stores, even at the risk of keeping the reader longer from matters more particularly connected with the subjects before us.

Having now so far intruded, I resume the narrative.

At Brighton I continued still wavering, until, having returned to London—it was already the beginning of April—not the first—when I received the following letter from Cuthbert.

Calcutta, Nov. 5, 18—.

MY DEAR BROTHER GILBERT,

“I have been anxiously watching the arrival of every ship from England, in hope of finding you reported as a passenger; an anxiety which was in no small degree augmented, first by your expressed resolution to come to me, and latterly by your silence. I should be extremely happy if it suited your inclinations to join me in my business, having now the whole and sole control of the concern.

“Mr. Nubley, who takes charge of this, and will forward it to you, has been, as you may recollect to have heard, settled in India for

upwards of thirty years. He was the second partner in our house when I first entered it. He has now retired from business, to his native country, with a fortune of upwards of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds. This I mention, in order that you may duly appreciate the offer which waits your acceptance.

“If you choose to come out, I will strain every effort to remain here, in order to place you precisely in the situation, relatively to myself, in which I have stood for the last nine years to Mr. Nubley; but unwilling as I may be, as it must be clear I am, to quit India altogether, I fear I shall be soon compelled to do so, on account of my health; and, in that case, the advantages which I contemplate for you, will be reaped by others, for whom I have no stronger feeling of regard than that which binds us together as fellow-men.

“Mr. Nubley has promised me to give you an insight into the nature of our traffic here, and to point out, should you not have started before his arrival in England, certain acquirements, which will greatly facilitate your success, and of

which, during the voyage out, you can make yourself master.

“I know nothing of your habits, except what I could collect from our dear mother’s letters ; but I feel pretty sure, that as you grow older, habits of regularity and business will become confirmed in you, and that in a very few years you will, like my worthy friend, of whom I have just spoken, return to England, a happy and wealthy man.

“Mr. Nubley is an excellent gentleman. He is somewhat absent in mind, and has a custom, for which it is as well perhaps to prepare you, of thinking aloud ; if you were not put upon your guard as to this little peculiarity, you might be apt to take offence at some of his observations : they are meant for himself, although he unconsciously gives them utterance ; and I believe, if everybody in the world had the same complaint (if it may be called one), people would cease to be so conceited of their own virtues and perfections as they are at present.

“Theophrastus says, at least I think so : Ab-

sence of mind may be defined to be a slowness of mind, in speaking or in action. The absent man is one, who when he is reckoning up a bill, and hath collected the particulars, will ask a by-stander what the amount is. When he is engaged in a law-suit, and the day of trial comes, he forgets it, and goes into the country. He goes to the theatre to see the play, and is left behind, asleep upon the benches. He takes any article, and puts it away securely; then he begins to look for it, and is never able to find it. If a man comes and tells him of the death of a friend, and asks him to the funeral, he says, with a melancholy countenance, and tears in his eyes, ‘What uncommon good luck!’ When he receives money, he calls men to witness the transaction; when he pays a debt, he does not. He quarrels with his servant for not bringing him cucumbers in winter; and forces his children to run and wrestle for their health, till they are ready to die of fatigue. When in the country, he dresses his dinner of herbs, he salts them until they are unfit to eat. And, if anybody

ask him, ‘How many dead have been carried through the sacred gate, to be buried?’ he answers, ‘I wish to my heart you and I had half as many.’

“Whether this learned piece of fuller’s earth (who, at a hundred and seven years of age, cried out against the injustice of nature, in giving crows longer lives than men,) anticipated that such a being as my late excellent master, and more recent partner, Nublely, was really to be born, I do not pretend to say; but certain it is, that his hypothetical description is the very portraiture of the man; and this I say, because I feel it to be right to prepare you for his oddities. He is the worthiest of created men, as I am sure you will find; and if you are not on your voyage hither before his arrival, cultivate his acquaintance, as I know he will afford you the opportunity of doing, and take his advice—above all, upon the point of your emigration.

“Mrs. Nublely was a venture girl from England, and a beauty, but she was exported nearly thirty years ago. Neither the lapse of time,

nor, which seems more extraordinary still, her looking-glass, appearing to have whispered in her ear—to be sure she *is* a little deaf—that an awful change has taken place in her personal appearance. She was always silly, weak, and vain; but while she had good grounds for vanity, the weakness did not appear so silly. Even when *I* first knew *her*, she had some pretensions—at present, it is pretension altogether.

“I give you the *carte du pays*—make what use you choose of it; whether it may be of any service, or whether it may not, I, of course, cannot judge; for strange as it seems, true it is, that although I am writing to a brother whom I tenderly love, I am addressing a gentleman whom I do not know. This, however, I *do* know, that when I was young, I had a disposition for every sort of gaiety, and a turn of mind for satire and caricature; and if I had been left—do not be angry with me for the expression—kicking up and down about London, a loungeur in the streets, an idler in society, and a dangler in the play-house green-rooms, my belief is, that I should

have ended my career in no very enviable position. I, however, was sent forward into the world, to beat and baffle, not only with the billows of the ocean, but of life. Trained regularly and methodically to business, I became assiduous, even by habit; and having gained a confidence, which, I believe, I deserved, I find myself placed in a situation of perfect competence and independence, and what is yet more gratifying, able to make a brother's fortune, if he choose to secure one.

“ You were the favourite, and, of course, my dear Gilbert, spoiled. I have often ventured to remonstrate, in some of my letters to our excellent mother, after I had experimentally ascertained the advantages of system, order, and regularity, upon the loose course of your education, and the manner in which you were thrown, much too soon, as I thought, upon society. However, my dear Gilbert, I will not frighten you with lectures, although I will be candid enough to tell you, that I have heard of you since our poor mother's death. I received a letter, full of affectionate

feeling towards you, from Mrs. Pillman, a lady, whom, of course, I never knew, but of whom, as Miss Crab, our mother used to write in the warmest terms. She, with an almost maternal regard, told me, with regret, of sundry little excesses of your's, and of your addiction to a class of society, which, however agreeable it may be, does not, in the eyes of the world, appear altogether respectable. I honour her for her solicitude, and returned her an answer. Such friends can have no sinister motive for their attention.

“All this, I conclude, is now at an end; and all I beg of you is,—like and love Mr. Nubley. I have told you of his peculiarities, but you will find him an invaluable friend, and perfectly prepared, for my sake, to do everything he can for you.

“I will not tire you with any details of our views and prospects here. We are continually agitating the question of opening the trade with England; and as I have no concern with the East India Company, but am merely the head

of a private mercantile house, I sometimes think, that great advantages may be derived from such a measure. However, the chances are, that I shall be removed from this world,—or, if not, certainly from this part of the world,—before any such experiment is tried. We have had a particularly healthy season ; and although war continues in all its vigour, the capture of the French Islands, with their dependencies, which always afforded a certain shelter to the enemy, gives us great relief.

“ I will say no more ; but wait either to hear from you or see you, as you may judge most expedient. At the same time, should you, under the circumstances, choose to remain at home, I shall be too happy to increase your income to any reasonable extent. I am not married, as you know, and perhaps shall not now enter into that holy estate ; but make no scruple of telling me your wishes,—always recollecting, that it would be the greatest possible gratification to me to have you here, and to leave in your hands the means of realizing an ample fortune

in a few years, and of eventually establishing yourself in England, comfortably and respectably.

“Pray take the earliest opportunity of seeing Mr. Nublely, and should you decide upon coming to me, he will give you sundry papers, essentially important to our affairs. I say ours, for if you come, you will be received at once as my partner. God bless you, my dear brother Gilbert. In writing to you, I feel like a man playing blind-man’s-buff: I should not know you, even in the light, and grope my way to your heart and feelings, without being in the slightest degree aware of the probability of the success of my appeal. At all events, write; and write often. In the meantime, believe me, dear Gilbert,

“Your affectionate brother,

“CUTHBERT GURNEY.”

This letter was a puzzler. Never was anything more kind or liberal than the offer it contained, and the proposition it presented. The

suggestion of an increased income at home, I could only counterbalance by Cuthbert's desire to have me abroad. His lecture I felt to be just; but I could not stomach the active malignity of that odious Mrs. Pillman,—the Crab of my earlier youth,—who thought it worth her while to write and undermine me in the affections of my brother. If Daly had been unmarried, and in force, she would have suffered for her duplicity. I, however, had no time to spare for thinking about *her*—she was beneath my revenge; and I resolved, notwithstanding the strange description my brother gave of the Nubleys, to follow his advice, or, rather, obey his command, of familiarizing myself with the newly-arrived couple. From them, I should learn the details of a residence at Calcutta. I should get a lesson of conduct, and a peep into the prospect of futurity.

Accordingly, I proceeded to the house in Broad Street,—obtained the address of Mr. Nubley (Ibbotson's Hotel, *iterum iterumque*,)—and the following morning presented myself at

the door of that popular caravansary of orientalists, before eleven o'clock. I was not, however, fortunate enough to find the curiosity;—like all other persons entrusted with the care of letters, he had—most naturally for him especially—forgotten all about mine, and had proceeded into Hampshire, to a Tusculum, which had belonged to his father; whence, at the suggestion of his lady wife, he had ejected, at the end of his term, a valuable tenant, and which Tusculum had been prepared for his reception several months before his arrival in England.

I had but one course left to pursue, which was forthwith to write to Chittagong Lodge, for so Nubley's house was called, to express my regret at his departure from London, and offering to pay him a visit in his retirement. This I did; and to my proposition received the following answer:—

Chittagong Lodge, April 15.

DEAR SIR,

I have many apologies to make to you. I

meant to have called on you when in town—haven't been in town for thirty-five years, I believe. I quite forgot to do so—and it was only Mrs. Nubley's finding the letter from your brother—she sent it to the agents. Very cold winds here—I have got a bad tooth-ache. Country strangely perplexed, and I do not like London. Will you come down here, and stay with us, for ten years if you like. I always say what I think—your brother is a capital fellow—so are you, I dare say—come—we are close to the high Southampton road—the house always was in the same place—my grandfather built it. My wife will be delighted to see you—so shall I—I am sure we shall like you—stop till you go to India. Come Monday—we dine at six—coach arrives before five—anybody will show you the way.

Yours truly,

PEREGRINE NUBLEY.

“*Ex pede Herculem*,” said I, when I had read this invitation. The letter was a transcript of

Nubley's mind—a perfect justification of Cuthbert's description. What upon earth could be more agreeable than accepting his invitation—my heart leaped at the prospect; it offered something odd, something new; and I lost no time in replying in the affirmative, and ordering my man to be ready on the next Monday morning to take our departure.

Monday came,—and as it was proposed, so was it executed. I travelled by the coach, because my friend had alluded to that conveyance; and without accident or incident, having journeyed alone, I was set down within a few hundred yards of his gates, at a quarter past five in the afternoon.

CHAPTER III.

My brother's letter had prepared me for an oddity in the shape of his valued friend and partner ; but differently from what in most cases falls out, the reality by far exceeded my anticipations. It is impossible to conceive the appearance of Mr. Nubley, I need not, therefore, say it is impossible to describe it. I will endeavour to sketch him, but I know the effort is vain.

I had seen Indians of all grades, ages and classes, I do not mean the savage tribes of American Indians; but Indians, so called from having resided in our different settlements in the East, although British born. I have seen the yellow-cheeked civilian, and the well bronzed soldier of half a century's standing, and these in all their varieties; but Mr. Nubley, who received me

at the door of his hospitable house, was unlike anything I had ever seen. In the first place, he was in no way connected with the Honourable John Company, (as the Court of Directors, and the proprietary generally, are *corporately* called in that country.) He was merely, purely, and simply, a merchant, who had accumulated a fortune; and now, as it appeared, was about to instruct me in the “way in which I ought to go,” to do the same. But, when I beheld him, as he was, and murmured to myself—must I be *that* when I return, I confess, however gratified I was by the warmth of his reception, I began very much to doubt as to my subsequent proceedings.

He was in figure short and thin; his head much too large for his body, and bald, with a little fringe of silver hair behind; his eyes were like those of whittings after three days’ keeping; his mouth exceedingly like that of a frog; the profoundest melancholy characterized his countenance; and his words, in a tone of voice exceedingly inharmonious, drawled slowly over his

lips, interrupted occasionally by sighs. The consequence was, as Cuthbert had stated, that long before he had finished the sentence with which he had started, his thoughts wandered, and having entirely lost the thread of his discourse, a new subject succeeded, which was treated in a similar manner: thus producing a confusion of words and ideas, that, if I had not been upon my guard, would have set me into one of those immoderate fits of laughter, which, at my then time of life, were something terrific.

It was when he had completely mystified himself, and entangled his conversation in a hard knot, that he began to think, meditate, and soliloquize. Truly enough had Cuthbert told me, that he “thought aloud;” in less than three hours after my reception, I had plenty of proofs of his correctness.

Mrs. Nubley—it may sound ungallant, coarse, and even unfeeling, but really, I cannot disguise my feelings—was, without any exception, the greatest fool I ever encountered in all my life, before or since. I am the last man in the

world to admire a very blue lady. There are in this country, women of abilities, superior, I am sure, to those of the women of any other nation on the earth—abilities blended, not only with softness, diffidence, and modesty, but based upon principles of the highest order, and the purest character. Such women are to be admired, venerated, and respected; but in the ordinary run of society, where a very considerable portion of imaginary talent and sense, consists of flourish and pretension, I seek nothing beyond the quiet possession of the common run of accomplishments. And, although I do not quite agree with one of the cleverest men in the country, who says, all that is required of a woman, is to be nicely dressed, and play the piano-forte, I am easily satisfied; and, however much I may be astonished by the multitudinous acquirements of the pedestal ladies, I prefer, for “home consumption,” the mild, the modest, and the gentle being, whose winning influence, and tender care, can make that home a heaven.

For home-consumption, however, Mrs. Nub-

ley was not made; slenderly educated, if educated at all, she was, as soon as she was fit for the Indian market, sent out by her father, who, having been left a widower, married a second wife, and was, together with his juvenile spouse, extremely glad to ship off Caroline, consigned to a highly-respectable firm in Calcutta, where, after a few exhibitions, she attracted the notice of the prosperous Nubley, and they were married.

I have no doubt that Miss Caddle—for such was her name before she, fortunately for herself and Peregrine, changed it—had been pretty; there were yet the remains of beauty about her. She was, however, as Cuthbert had described her, a white variety; but from the mode in which she dressed, and the way in which she talked, I was certain she saw no change in herself since the day she left Mrs. Oglethorpe's seminary, at Stepney. She must, however, speak for herself: the leading characteristic of the stuff she uttered, was an affected disbelief of every thing that was told her. An exclamation of delight, at the comicality of her companions, even when engaged

upon the most serious subjects, concluding universally with a parrot-like scream of laughter, a toss up of the head, and an involuntary application of three of her fingers to her mouth—an action which had grown into habit, from the double advantage it possessed, of exhibiting the snowy whiteness of her hand, and hiding a *hiatus valdè deflendus*, caused by the absence without leave of one of her front teeth.

Such was the pair, so

“ Justly formed to meet by nature,”

with whom I found myself domesticated at Chittagong Lodge.

I confess, the first evening hung rather heavy on hand. The house contained a mixture of old-fashioned furniture, and of newly-imported gim-crackery from India. Everything smelt of shawls and sandal-wood, combined with a strong flavour of curry and mulligatawney; and yet neither of the people seemed in keeping with the objects and atmosphere by which they were surrounded.

When I was left alone with mine host, I felt a sort of dread of the business upon which I was certain he was about to enter, notwithstanding the relief I experienced by the removal of Mrs. Nubley to the drawing room. The clapper in a cherry-tree to frighten away birds, and the cackling of hens, each cackle concluded by the scream of a peacock, in wet weather, were all imitated, and indeed embodied, in her conversation—even the melancholy drawl and drone of her exemplary husband, afforded repose to mine ears: and having after a few minutes discovered that the discourse of the day was to be devoted to his own discomforts and disappointments since he returned home—or, as he appeared to think it, come abroad—I listened with the devoted patience of a doomed one, determined that he ought to have his way in his own house, especially in the absence of his better half.

“I never was happy,” said Nubley, “till I left India—I never was so miserable as I am now—fogs—cold—came over in a bad ship—badly found—bad captain—my wife—uncomfortable—

delicate constitution—I can't bear salt beef—not half enough poultry—ch !”—here he paused, and fixed his eyes upon me, and began to pick the stubble hair out of his chin, with a short sharp sort of jerk—he sat so occupied for about half a minute, when he began to think—“ Umph—knew his father—foolish man—not quite so ugly as Cuthbert—don't think he'll ever come to good in the house—I'll see.”

I was the subject of the reverie—I did not exactly know how to act, but having been prepared, I thought it best to let him fancy that he had said nothing.

“ I suppose, Sir,” said I, “ you feel the change of climate, after so long an absence ?”

“ Yes,” replied my interesting companion, “ I feel the change of every thing. When I arrived—ch !—the first thing you see I did—a man likes the place where he was born and bred—Hottentots do—so do the Swiss—ch !—and I remembered my native place—took my wife—why the devil I ever married I can't think—amiable woman to be sure—talk—ch !—don't

she talk—I don't know why I should ask *him* the question—I took her there—nobody knew her—overhung with trees—there was the church tower—and wind-mill on the hill, just as I left them—told her of all the beaux and belles of the town—eh !—Captain Gossamer, as we used to call Tom Wilkins—best dancer in the world—eh !—the Miss Mayfields—the graces—symmetry—famous—and little Fanny Thompson—dear thing, I remember her—in powder and a sack—feathers—three feet high, and high heels to her shoes—took my wife there—made a point of going to the county ball—asked for my friends—two of the Miss Mayfields had died widows—saw three of their grand children dancing—and the third was bed-ridden. Tom Wilkins, Gossamer Tom, was wheeled into the room in a chair, his body as big as a Dorchester butt, and his leg as thick as a milestone—eh !”

“The effect must have been singular,” said I.

“That's a silly remark,” thought Nubley ;

“never mind—it was singular—Fanny Thompson, a thing like a tetotum, died in the year ’99 of a dropsy; and when I asked where young Bob Buz, the curate, was,—the finest fellow I ever saw to switch a rasper, as he used to call it—I found he was Bishop of Dorchester—my friend Tippit, the attorney, had been hanged for forgery fourteen years before; and Squill, the apothecary, had run away with the squire’s daughter; and after passing what the monsters told me was a long and happy life, had died worth a hundred thousand pounds.”

“Curious,” said I, not knowing exactly what to do.

“I tell you what was more curious still,” said Nubley; “you’d hardly believe that I could see the changes in all these people,—but la, bless your heart, they didn’t know *me*, who was not altered at all—not one of the survivors recollected me. Wilkins, with his great gouty toe, asked somebody who that old gentleman was—meaning me. Now, Sir, I

don't feel myself one bit altered since I danced Sir Roger de Coverley at Christmas, in that very room, with a cocked hat on my head."

"One does not perceive the change in self—it is produced so gradually," said I.

"Ah! that's it, is it?" said mine host. "You are a very wise fellow, no doubt—umph—my wife, too—that's a woman—there's spirits—wonderful—how she does go on—even in such a wind as this—you call this fine weather, I suppose?"

"For this country," said I.

"Have you ever been in any other?" said Nubley.

That was a most awkward question, because I had not. I replied "No—but that I judged by description."

"Never judge by description," said Nubley. "My father bought this house by description—to me the horridest hole I ever was in."

"Indeed, Sir!—surely it is remarkably pleasant," said I.

“Pleasant, is it?” said Nubley; “well then I lie, and you are a fine gentleman.”

This observation startled me, not being prepared for language so violent, or an antithesis so strong—I merely made a sort of conciliatory noise.

“You write plays, don’t you?” said Nubley.

Pleasant again, thought I.

“Not plays, Sir,” said I.

“Farces, don’t you call ’em?—pantomimes—eh?” said my friend; “stuff—trumpery—eh?”

“I never wrote but one, Sir.”

“Ah! that was one too many,” replied my agreeable companion; and then again setting his grey eyes right on my face, he began stubbling his chin, as before, and, in a soft tone, and slow manner, said, “Broke his mother’s heart—nice farce to do that—wonder if he cared about it—should not think he did.”

I found it the most difficult thing in the world to know what to do, while undergoing the ordeal of his cogitations. I felt greatly inclined to

notice what he uttered, because I knew whence, and whence only, he could have obtained this impression. The indefatigable malevolence of the late Miss Crab had been at work, and I had no doubt she had given Cuthbert an unfavourable impression of me, my pursuits, and acquaintances ;—founded, perhaps, to a certain extent, in justice, which, upon the principle of a process in art, long afterwards discovered, Cuthbert had transferred to the mind,—if mind it might be called,—which was now throwing off a few proofs of the success of the experiment.

“ Ah !” drawled out my agreeable companion, resuming the chair, after his brains had been in committee, and speaking, instead of thinking,—“ we had better go and have some coffee. Mrs. Nubley is alone—poor body—very dull for her, after the society she has been used to—pleasant people, too, in the neighbourhood—some of them dine here to-morrow—the Empsons—agreeable family—daughters—eh—live in the house with the red bricks and white facings, on your right hand—and the Illingworths, and the

parson, Wells,—very jolly,—like him—eh—preaches short sermons—and plays long whist—like to play against him, eh—do you play whist?”

Before I could reply to a question the answer to which I apprehended would place me,—as they say of a boy at school,—in the esteem of my host and patron, he had fallen into a reverie, and fixed his vacant stare upon me, and had expressed his opinion,—“Shouldn’t think you could—not head enough for whist—eh?”

That I did not usually play whist, I ventured to say;—that I did not know anything of the game, I thought it as well to conceal.

“Well, we’ll see,” continued Nubley; “we’ll have our coffee, and then we’ll see what you can do with a dummy against Mrs. N. and me—longs—I can’t bear shorts—I play whist for amusement, and I like it—the longer the game lasts, the more amusement it gives me—eh. I dare say you think me an old fool—I don’t care a cowrie for that—come.”

The last remark with which Mr. Nubley

favoured me, was so equivocally delivered, that I should have fancied he had been speaking, instead of thinking; but as there was a doubt, and if I had noticed it, I must have made some fine flaming speech, complimentary to his wisdom, I merely simpered, and prepared to follow him; when, as he proceeded to ring the bell, to announce our removal to the servant, I heard him mutter, "I wonder what the deuce he is grinning at?"

I admit, that having passed four hours in Chittagong Lodge, I did repent a little of having at once plunged *in medias res*, and pledged myself to a protracted visit. However, time softens asperities, and I hoped that the Nubleys, like olives, would become more palatable when I got accustomed to them; and, resolving to put the best face upon the matter, and, according to Cuthbert's recommendation, dig for the ore through the unpromising soil, I proceeded to the drawing-room, where sat Mrs. Nubley alone, on a sofa, playing at cup-and-ball.

“Lauk, Nubley,” screamed the lady, “what a time you have been. I’m dead sleepy;—all your fault, Mr. Gurney, every bit of it. Your sex, in England, are so inattentive to females—he, he, he, he !”

“I assure you,” said I, “that time has flown so agreeably, that I was not at all conscious of the time.”

“Lauk !” replied the fair creature, “how can you talk so?—you are such a man for quizzing. Agreeable ! I’m sure you must have made all the agreeableness yourself—he, he, he !”

“Perhaps not, my dear,” said Mr. Nubley ; “tastes differ. We have had some very interesting conversation.”

I endeavoured to consider to what part of our dialogue this observation was applicable.

“May be so,” retorted the lady ; “Mr. N. can be very agreeable when I am absent, and any where but at home : I always say he hangs his fiddle up with his hat—did you ever hear that saying before, Mr. Gurney ?—he, he, he !”

“Once, I think, Ma’am,” said I, with becoming gravity.

“Once,” said Nubley, “a thousand times, it is in all the jest books”—and then came a reverie, “What a fool she is, trying to play the agreeable with that young coxcomb.”—“Have you had your tea, my dear?” followed immediately.

“No,” said the lady, “the fool hasn’t had her tea.”

Nubley growled, and walked to the window, and there indulged in a long conversation with himself.

I discovered, however, by Mrs. Nubley’s observation, that the mental ejaculations of her happy husband were not always suffered to pass unnoticed, at least by her. The effect her remark produced, was however sufficiently visible to assure me that it was somewhat out of the ordinary run of events. Mr. Nubley grew cold and reserved, and acting upon the principle of buckets in a well, Mrs. Nubley became

proportionably more lively: she rattled and clattered in the most marvellous manner; described all the families in the neighbourhood; gave me a catalogue *raisonné* of the beauties, and summed up, by bidding me take care and not lose my heart to Miss Wells, the rector's daughter; concluding with one of her most violent convulsions of laughter, and a look, which at sixteen, would no doubt have been very exhilarating.

The next day came the talked of party, and the relief was delightful; the description of Mr. and Mrs. Nubley of their neighbours had not been overcharged; the people were agreeable, and pretty, and very nice; but my choice was made after half an hour's association with them—the Wellses were the flowers of the flock. Wells was an extremely pleasant man, and Mrs. Wells, when and where she liked, an agreeable woman. The daughter—for although there were three, one only came to dinner—was extremely nice, and rational and agreeable; she

was palish, with soft, intelligent, blueish greyish eyes, and under those eyes a darkness of skin to *me* most engaging; she had fair hair, and a remarkably pretty mouth, about which there was a playfulness, which gave a peculiar air of *naïveté* to all her observations. None of her features were what some particular and affected personages would call 'classical': but she was "very nice." Her figure, though upon a small scale, was particularly good, just plump enough to hide angles, and full of those in-and-out-isms which constitute in my mind true symmetry; as for her feet, Cinderella's slippers would have been, as Shakspeare says, "a world too wide."

The day and evening passed away, much as days and evenings do, but by a sort of congeniality of feeling, which I cannot describe, Mr. Wells and I, and Miss Wells and I, and Mrs. Wells and I, seemed to be more together than any others of the party. I found him full of anecdote, of ready wit, and of certainly a convivial turn. Mrs. Wells say that I admired her daughter, and therefore set me down for a

gentleman of taste ; and Miss Wells, being equally aware of my opinion, was in so good a humour as to be really delightful.

This pre-disposition in my favour, was, I have no doubt, strengthened by the representations made by Mrs. Nubley of the wealth of my brother, and of the opportunity which presented itself to me of joining him in the extensive concerns of his important establishment. Every thing was *couleur de rose* ; and when we broke up for the night, Mr. Wells hoped I would call upon him the next day : he had a capital billiard-table, a good library, guns, fishing-rods, every thing that could contribute to killing time and game, and he should be delighted, and so on.

When they were gone, we of course talked over our friends ; but when Mrs. Nubley began rallying me about my particular attention to the Wellses, I thought I never heard anything so grating and discordant in my life, as the tone of her voice. Yet when she praised Mrs. Wells and her family, I thought it sounded infinitely less inharmonious.

I *did* call at Wells's next day; I did see his comfortable house, and his library, and his rods, and his guns, and his billiard-table; played half-a-dozen games with him,—we were an excellent match,—just what is always agreeable to a billiard player in his own house, he could win four games out of six; and there I staid until it was time to go home, as I called it, to dinner. Wells even pressed me to stop and partake of theirs; but I felt it was impossible to absent myself from the Nubleys without notice or permission, so I returned to Chittagong-house—not however without regret, nor before I had promised to go the next day to luncheon with the Wellses.

This was the first morning of my acquaintance with this worthy family. I candidly admit, that what I saw I liked, and perhaps—however ungracious it may seem to say so—liked it all the better from the contrast it afforded to the proceedings at *our* establishment. I need scarcely say, that the visit was repeated, and repeated, until my visits there became habitual; and until at last Mrs. Nubley began to complain of my ex-

clusive attentions there, as depriving her of what she was pleased to call "*my agreeable society.*" However, she had a female friend just arrived, who was staying with her; and at my then time of life, I was in the habit of gratifying my inclinations and pleasing myself, without perhaps a due regard to the feelings or expectations of others.

Nubley went dreaming on, and although I had been at Chittagong Lodge upwards of five weeks, never had once touched upon the subject which brought us together. I lived in a state of indescribable nervousness lest he should broach it; and he, I really believe, feeling himself, even divided as my attentions were, relieved and supported by my presence, was equally unwilling to press a topic, the discussion of which would in all probability terminate my stay. He had installed me as croupier at his dinner-table, and besides treating me openly with attention and kindness, had evidently changed his opinion of me, a fact which I collected from his murmured thoughts. One thing seemed strange, and was certainly complimentary to me. It seemed as

if I were equally agreeable to the mistress as to the master of the house ; and having arranged my mornings much to my satisfaction, and the evenings being frequently varied, either by making visits or receiving company, I began to be quite comfortable under the unpromising roof of my hospitable friend.

As for the effects of my semi-domestication at Wells's, like the approaches of age, they were so gradual, as to be individually almost imperceptible. Nothing on earth is so treacherous, or so delightful, as the habitual association with agreeable people in the country. In London there is a round—a circle—a sphere—and people move in it, and jostle, and part, and talk, and flirt, and laugh, and separate, and, except for a moment in assemblies or at balls, do not meet perhaps again for a month. But in the country, placed as I was with this dear delightful family, the attachment grew hourly and daily, until I at last became identified with their pursuits and amusements ; until, when I began to think it absolutely necessary to leave the

Nubleys, lest, as the saying goes, I should wear out my welcome, I found it more difficult than ever to make up my mind to part from the Wellses.

Of course it will be thought, as indeed it was said, by several of those meddling gossip-mongers who invariably infest small country town society, and who, having been civilly drawn out of their sequestered houses or lodgings to enjoy the amusements and conversation of their wealthier or more aristocratic neighbours, repay those little attentions, by making observations upon all combinations and connections they happen to see; and retail, in their own *coterie*, every incident or conversation, whence they can collect subject matter to wound or annoy innocent people, who are merely following the bent of their own inclinations, and enjoying the "goods the Gods provide," that I was a received and accepted lover. My constant visits at the rectory were food for all sorts of stories; and, above all, for the report that I was almost immediately to be married to Miss

Wells. Now, how really stood the case?—the family of the Wellses liked *me*, and I liked *them*, and so we lived constantly together.

Miss Edgeworth, in one of her admirable novels, has expressed her opinion of the important effects of juxtaposition in bringing about the most serious change in our state of life; and certain it is, that its influence is never so decidedly powerful as when the *two*, so constantly together, are associated in a quiet neighbourhood, where either party is intimately acquainted with all the peculiarities of the *locale*, and all the combinations and connexions of its inhabitants. Both are then competent to judge, and to discuss, and even to think alike; and certainly, if Harriet Wells and I ever thought or talked of anything except ourselves, our conversation derived its peculiar interest from the community of our knowledge as to men and matters by which we were surrounded.

As I write this without any view of its meeting the eye of strangers, I will honestly confess, that I had as much idea of being in love with

Harriet Wells as I had of flying. As Wolcot, the radical rhymers, who called himself Peter Pindar, said, when speaking of the wonderful powers of Mrs. Siddons, and the effect producible by those powers upon the tenderer passions of the other sex,—“She is beautiful, magnificent, and enchanting, but I should as soon think of marrying the Archbishop of Canterbury.” Now, Harriet was extremely nice and agreeable; but I certainly had no more idea of marrying her than Peter had of pairing with the Primate.

It is true, that, after a time, Harriet and I walked about together. I went to her father’s house every day after breakfast, and she used to sit down at the pianoforte, and her sister Fanny accompanied her, and they played duets; and then we fancied we liked particular songs,—“*Sul margine*,” I recollect, was one,—and Eliza, the youngest of the Wellses, a little plump thing in a pinafore, used to mix in our revels; and then we had luncheon, and then Mrs. Wells was very good-natured, and then I used to play the Devil with the girls; and then

—But stay; somebody *may* see what I write, and, be it understood that, by playing the “Devil,” I mean playing a game so called, which originated, I think, with the Cherokees, but was introduced into this country about the period of which I treat, and received with an enthusiasm not to be described. The devil was a wooden thing, shaped like an hour-glass, and he danced merrily upon a string extended scientifically between two sticks, and he hopped up, and he dropped down, and we twirled him this way, and wriggled him the other way, and tossed him over our heads, and caught him upon our line, and then, Devil-like, across the sticks;—and, in short, he made very good fun. From the influence of this imp, “no age, no profession, no station, was free;” and “the greatest and gravest” were its votaries. Judges and bishops have been known to participate in its delights, and the Board of Admiralty, with the first Lord at its head, have been seen, relaxing from the severer duties of state, in the diabolical amusement, in the garden at the back of their office,

at Charing Cross. At this harmless diversion I was, what Etonians call, a dab; and Harriet's figure looked so pretty when her arms were uplifted to catch the descending devil, that I really thought I never beheld anything much more engaging. I suppose she saw, by my eyes, what I thought; for she seemed to grow more and more good-natured as our acquaintance matured, and at last appeared to expect me at luncheon as regularly as she looked for that semi-demi-dinner itself.

But, dear me, I did not *love* her. I felt none of that hangable, drownable desperation about her that I had once felt before for another. Not I. I was interested about her, merely by Miss Edgeworth's juxtaposition. My visits had become habitual. I seemed to be looked for at Mr. Wells's, and I should not have fancied my day properly made out, if I had not gone there; and then I knew everything that was in the girls' work-boxes, and in their music books; and I tossed over the threads, and pulled about the strips of muslin, and picked the pins out of the pin-

cushions, and stuck them in again, and talked of Widow Harrison's sprained ankle, and old Walker's rheumatism, and went with Harriet and Fanny, loaded with flannel for one, and a bottle of wine for the other. In short, there I was, happy beyond measure, having a dear, sweet-tempered creature always on my arm, or, if not leaning so, sauntering by my side, till at last I never felt happy unless I were there;—and yet I was not in love.

The time, however, as I have just said, had arrived, at which, it appeared to me, that I ought to quit Chittagong Lodge. "Harriet," said I,—I had got to call her Harriet, and had, I admit, established a slight right of familiarity with her, by voting myself her brother. It is quite extraordinary by what means congenial spirits commingle. I used to call her "sister," and so called her Harriet;—she used to call me "brother," and so called me Gilbert: and then she was a bit of an astronomer, and she loved to watch the moon when it was full and bright, and we used to go and look at it; and then I used to

be so very much afraid that she would catch cold; and then I used to tie her handkerchief round her neck, and then she used to thank "her brother," and then "her brother" used to be very much pleased with her sisterly gratitude, and I believe once or twice, not oftener, permitted his approbation of her sororial affection to produce a sort of fraternal acknowledgment, which, between two such near and dear relations, could not be very wrong. And this was the way I went on, but without an idea of my pure affection for the dear girl ever assuming any other character.

"Harriet," said I, the moon being exceedingly bright, "what a dreadful thing it is, that when a man is most happy he is most miserable!"

"What *do* you mean?" said Harriet.

"I mean," said I, "that no human being can be more perfectly happy than I am at this moment; and yet, paradise as it is, I must leave it."

"Leave it!" said Miss Wells, and her dove-

like eyes were turned upon me with a look not to be forgotten. "Where are you going?"

"I must go to town," said I.

"Must you?" said Harriet, and I felt a sort of involuntary pressure on my arm;—she was leaning on it;—and then came a dead silence—a pause of five minutes. It was at that moment I first began to think I was fonder of Harriet than I meant to be; for what on earth endears a girl to one so much,—what so entirely upsets all resolutions, fetters the mind, and chains the heart, as the notion that *she* loves?

I found I could not break this silence. Harriet kept her eyes on the ground, and walked with a measured step. I felt that she trembled. What could I, what ought I, to do? I had but three hundred and ninety pounds a-year, certain. She had nothing: as I have said before, two negatives make an affirmative in grammar, but, "barring *accidence*," two nothings never make anything. I should have liked to have caught her to my heart, utterly stifled her with kisses, and proposed; but I had no right to do so. I

had no right to presume to take a charming girl out of a sphere in which she was happily placed, and subject her to the ups and downs of a life regulated only by the annual receipt of three hundred and ninety pounds. So I just laid my hand upon my heart, and said, *sotto voce*, "Be quiet."

The eloquence of silence is proverbial. We both felt it; and Harriet made no effort to speak, until just as we got to a side gate, opening into her father's grounds. The sight of home seemed to reassure her; and the consciousness that such was her feeling, made me uncomfortable. Trusted with this young creature, (young enough myself, God knows!) and having had her thus implicitly confided to me in our wanderings, could I have wounded her feelings so deeply, that, until she felt that sort of instinctive courage which, if not the paternal presence, the paternal property (the consciousness of being at home,) could give, she did not dare speak till then? No, no. I had done nothing, said nothing, which could intentionally offend her.

“And when,” said she, having evidently kept my last words in her thoughts ever since they were uttered—“and when do you go, Gilbert?”

“I think the day after to-morrow,” said I.

“I thought,” replied the dear, kind-hearted creature, “you were engaged to dance with Miss Illingworth at the ball on Tuesday?”

“Miss Illingworth?” said I, with unaffected surprise.

“Yes, Gilbert,” said Miss Wells. “If *you* forget your promises, I do not. I heard you make that promise at Mrs. Nubley’s the other evening. I never forget what I hear.”

“I dare say you are right,” said I, glad to affect a sort of gaiety; “but I scarcely recollect Miss Illingworth herself.”

“Ah! then you should,” replied Harriet. “What is sport to *you*, may be death to *her*. Hopes are excited, thoughts inspired, wishes created, by a word or a look, where the feelings are interested, or the heart prepossessed. *You* forget what you said; perhaps *she* does not. I

know she admires you : it will wound her if you are not present to fulfil your promise, for she has talked about it to others."

"My dear Harriet," said I, "bright as the moon is, I am delighted that it is even yet so dark that my blushes cannot be seen. I give you my honour that, if I did say anything of the sort to Miss Illingworth, it was said most inadvertently ; and as for anything I may say to a young lady, amongst the many of this neighbourhood, having an effect upon her heart, you really do me too much honour."

Harriet drew her arm from mine,—I cannot describe how,—and, in a tone of something between laughing and crying, exclaimed, "Here's mamma waiting for us." So she was. Harriet, however, passed her, and ran into the house.

"Mr. Gurney," said Mrs. Wells, "you keep that girl out too late ; she is a delicate creature, and ought not to breathe night air. I really must insist upon it, that she does not stay in the grounds after the evening has closed in."

It was very evident that Mrs. Wells was very

angry, and I endeavoured to mollify her ire by making an observation upon the clearness of the sky and the brightness of the moon, to which she did not appear to me to return such agreeable answers as heretofore had dropped from her lips. As the aspect of affairs seemed gloomy, I thought the next best thing to do was to effect a retreat, and I accordingly wished her a good night, to that she returned a sort of half-and-half answer; when, to my surprise, I heard a sudden rustling in, or rather out of, a laurel hedge that flanked the walk by which Harriet and I had returned to the house, succeeded by the immediate appearance of Mr. Wells himself, who exclaimed, in a mock-heroic tone—

“ ‘ Who talks of going, with a voice so sweet ? ’ ”

“ What ! ” cried Mrs. Wells, “ are *you* there my dear ? ”

“ My love, I am,” replied Wells. “ But what do you mean by letting Gilbert go at this unusually early hour ? Where’s Harriet ? ”

“She is in the house,” said the matron.

“Ah, well,” said Wells, “so will we be soon. You, of course, will stop, Gurney, and have our little music, and our piquet, and our *petit souper*—eh? Nothing like winding-up well.”

“I thought you were gone to bed,” said Mrs. Wells to her husband.

“Did you, my dear?” answered he; “then, for once in your life, you were mistaken. Come, let us go in. Is the billiard-room lighted? Let us be gay—life is short; we will have a touch at the queues and balls. Come—come along.”

And so, with great joyousness, we entered the hospitable old house by one of the modernised French windows, which, as the French themselves say, “gave to the lawn.”

Nothing could be more comfortable—nothing more agreeable. We went to the billiard-room. I chose my favourite quene,—chalked him—poised him—pointed the red ball—and went off (which Mr. Wells always forced me to do); but I made nothing, and did not feel quite sure what ought

to be done with the balls when my respectable adversary had played, because—and it was quite a new feeling—Harriet was not in the room. The pinafores were gone to bed; and Mrs. Wells, who did not seem to have recovered her good temper, established herself at a work-table in the billiard-room, which served as a second drawing-room, and was by no means exclusively devoted to the game.

I wondered where Harriet was. I never had felt either anxious about her coming or going before; but it seemed to me that our dialogue in the garden had closed unsatisfactorily, and I was afraid that she was somehow affronted, or wounded, or annoyed, and had gone to bed, as well as her sisters. I saw the balls running about the table, but my mind was not with them: my thoughts were up-stairs—fixed on things above.

“Why, you cannot make a hazard, Gilbert: what is the matter?” said Wells.

“I do not know,” said I. “That is a cannon, however.”

“Not a bit of it!” exclaimed the enthusiastic performer,—“a kiss!”

“Ah,” said I, “probably. Then here goes again.”

“And that,” exclaimed my opponent, “is a miss!”

I did not at all like this combination of words, and, in fact, wished the game at Old Scratch, when suddenly was opened the door of the billiard-room, and in came Harriet, looking as demure, as placid, as good-natured, and as perfectly alive to the ordinary amusements of the evening as ever. I watched her, to see if there were a trace of ill-feeling towards me on her countenance. Dear soul! no. And when she sat herself down by her mother, and commenced that most absurd of all anomalous nonsenses called “work,” I felt that I was extremely glad she took so much interest in my concerns, and showed so much anxiety for my fulfilment of engagements.

I won’t go the day after to-morrow, thought I, as I gave my ball a thump which caused it to hit the other white ball exactly on the opposite side

to that which I meant it to touch. I will stay, and I will dance with Miss Illingworth, to show Harriet that I religiously keep my word, and prove to her how powerfully her reproof has acted upon me. Just as if she had known my thoughts, Harriet lifted her eyes from the strip of muslin which she held in her hand, and looked towards me. Our eyes met. I cannot define the character of their expression ; but I recollect saying to myself, “ Upon my life, I am carrying this joke a little too far.”

At half-past ten, as usual, supper was announced, and we proceeded to the dinner parlour—room never to be forgotten by *me*. It was a low wainscotted apartment, with a beam below the ceiling, which it supported, crossing it in the middle. Every footstep in the chambers above, could be heard over-head ; and, except that it was of a good size, it was by no means a desirable *salle à manger*. To *me*, however, it was delightful : it had been consecrated by hospitality and kindness ; and the strongest feeling by which I was actuated, as I led my

amiable hostess into it, was that of regret that, whether I stayed till Wednesday or not, I must at all events, leave it within a very few days.

Yet, for all that, I felt assured that I did not love Harriet,—not as lovers love. The great puzzle was, how to define the sentiment which she had inspired. It was more than friendship. Friendship cannot last long between two people circumstanced as we were. Of Platonism I have a very faint notion; for it seems to me that feelings, like time, cannot stand still: to what point my intimacy with Harriet had carried mine I could not exactly ascertain; and certainly had never imagined how essential her society had habitually become to my happiness, until I found myself on the eve of being deprived of it.

At supper, Harriet seemed out of spirits, and her mother, what I considered watchful,—and a watchful mother, in a small party, is unbearable. On the contrary, mine host was more than usually agreeable: his conversation was full of joke and repartee, in which he was eminently successful when he chose to be so;

but, somehow, it appeared to me that he talked more than usual of the advantages of matrimony, its comforts—its blessings—the respectability it gave to a young man—the refined delights it afforded to a young woman.

“Sarah and I,” said Mr. Wells, “are proofs of the soundness of my doctrine. We married young, and have lived long, and never repented it,—never disqualified for Dunmow yet.”

“I’m sure,” said the lady, “if we ever *have* differed, the fault has been yours; and I must say, with regard to the doctrine you are now supporting, I *do* differ entirely. Why should people think about marrying without means? The old proverb is quite true——”

“Which Moore has so sweetly versified,” said I.

“I know nothing of versification, Mr. Gurney,” said the matron; “but *this* I know, that nothing, in my opinion, can be more unwise, than bringing two people together without fortune, and entailing upon them a life of perpetual embarrassment and worry.”

“ You are wrong my dear,” said mine host. “ Where there is genius or talent, the very fact of having a fond and affectionate wife dependent upon him for existence, is an excitement to a man to exert his energies, baffle the waves of opposing ills, and, by ‘ opposing, end them.’ ”

Thinks I to myself, that *may* be very true; but if I saw a wife so depending upon *me*, the very thought of the precariousness of her position, and the regret for having removed her from competency to share my difficulties, would unnerve and unfit me for the exertions it would be my duty to make. Harriet took no part in the conversation, but appeared entirely absorbed in the delicate and difficult task of peeling a peach.

“ I confess,” continued Mrs. Wells, who was as obstinate as Echo in the particular of having the last word, “ I see no good in preaching what nobody in their senses would practise.”

“ What do *you* say, Gurney?” said Mr. Wells.

“Why, Sir,” said I,—and I was rather flurried by the question,—“I—really——”

“Suppose, now,” said Wells, “a girl of eighteen or nineteen—more or less, as the case may be—had won your heart, and you had won her’s,—should you stop to consider whether you could live upon so much a year, or so much more, or—as I said before—less? I know you would not.”

“Why, Sir,” said I, “Love seldom calculates. He is painted blind. I never have thought upon the subject; but of this I am quite sure, that, whatever love without money may be, money without love is destruction.”

“I told you so, Sarah,” exclaimed mine host. “Few young hearts are mercenary—a woman’s heart never is, as I firmly believe. She will squander and waste to the right and to the left; and she will make her husband give *fêtes*, and parties, and dinners, and *déjeûners*, and all the rest of it; but a selfish, stingy woman is a *rara avis*.”

“Better be stingy, Mr. Wells,” said Sarah, “as you call it, than extravagant. More

fortunes have been saved than made; and I hate to hear you talk in so unguarded a way while persons are present who certainly ought not to listen to such principles."

"Sally, my love," said Wells, who was somewhat taken aback by his wife's reproof, "I never say what I do not mean, and I live with my children as I do with my friends. If my words were not in accordance with my thoughts, I should not argue as I *have* done; as they are, and as I have no concealments, I speak out, and I should think myself the most unhappy father in the world, if I thought a daughter of mine could be spoiled by a misinterpretation of my sentiments."

"As for your daughters being spoiled," said Mrs. Wells significantly, "I do not pretend to say anything about it; but I think we may as well retire. Come, Harriet, it is quite time for bed."

Harriet, who had taken no share in the conversation, looked at her father and then at me. Wells saw that his wife was what might be

called out of humour about something, and seemed to me to be resolved, in spite of his former brag about the Dunmow flitch, to have his own way.

“Why, Sarah, dear,” exclaimed he, “are you going to bed without your negus? my poor girl too has had nothing in the world to eat or to drink.”

“Nothing for me, Pa,” said the innocent girl, with an expression of fear of Ma’s anger.

“I want nothing more, Mr. Wells,” said the old lady; “I cannot bear to hear nonsense.”

“Well, love,” replied her husband, “we won’t quarrel for the first time in our lives about nonsense—it would be nonsense if we did; so, Harriet, ring the bell, and let us have in our accustomed hot water, sugar, and the *et ceteras*.

‘Black spirits and white,
Red spirits and grey;
Mingle, mingle, mingle,
Ye that mingle may.’

What a fellow that Shakspeare was, Gurney!

No circumstance can occur, no occasion present itself, but his words—prophetic and inspired as they are—become more applicable, more to the point, than any other we can find.”

“Even when perverted,” said I; and when I turned my head to meet the wonted gentle smile of Harriet, I saw a tear trickling down her cheek. What had caused it? something her mother had looked, no doubt, for she had said nothing. I felt extremely uncomfortable, and repented not having gone “on the first intention,” as surgeons say of the healing of a wound. I never had been placed in so unpleasant a situation during the whole course of my acquaintance with the family; it was a release when the servant obeyed the injunction he had received, and disturbed the awkward silence which followed my last attempt to make conversation, by the noise he created in putting down the glasses, and bottles, and decanters, and jugs of hot and cold water, with which it was the custom to decorate the table at Mr. Wells’s, at that period of the evening.

Mrs. Wells, however, was not to be soothed ; she would drink no negus, and she *would* go to bed. Harriet, who was conscious of no offence, and who found herself supported by, I believe, her favourite parent, gave a gentle affirmative to her father's inquiry whether she would have some wine and water : this seemed to increase Mrs. Wells's ill-humour, who, pushing her chair from the table, rose from her seat, and said in a most awful tone, " Well, *I* am going to bed ;" and, in order to put this determination into immediate practice, proceeded to the table in the corner of the room, whereon were deposited the chamber candlesticks, for the purpose of procuring a light. I saved her the trouble, lighted her candle, and presented it to her ; she did not thank me, but that, as we were old friends, I did not much care about ; but, looking at Harriet, she said, in a most discordant tone, " I suppose, Miss, you will not be long after me ?"

This unsettled my poor girl, who was about

to swallow her whole glass of wine and water at a gulp, and accompany her exemplary mother, when Wells interposing, said, "When she is tired of our society, she will go. Sit still, Harriet—finish your wine and water—if you are not sleepy, stay where you are."

I saw the look which Mrs. Wells gave her husband after this speech; it was full of reproach; it seemed to say, "That's right, Mr. Wells, teach your daughter to disregard her mother." He evidently understood it as I did, and when she quitted the room, which she did with an air of indignant grandeur, Wells jumped up and followed her. Harriet then seemed most anxious to follow them; *that I prevented.*

"*You* are not going?" said I.

"I think I had better go," replied Harriet, "I am afraid Papa's angry."

"I am sure Mamma is," said I; "but don't you think it would be better to let them settle their little differences by themselves? Besides,

if you go, I must, and I have no intention of moving for this hour; your father has not yet commenced what he calls his 'brewing.'"

"I cannot think what has happened to put my mother so much out of humour," said Harriet.

"Nor I," said I, "except that perhaps she thinks I kept you out too late in the air; however, if that be all, I shall have few opportunities of repeating the offence."

"But are you really going so soon?" said Harriet.

"I must," replied I; "besides all other reasons, one seems paramount; I came down to this neighbourhood to stay with my friends the Nubleys, and from the first week I made your acquaintance, I have only been four evenings at their house, unless they had company."

"But you *will* stay for the ball?" said Harriet.

"If you wish it."

"Of course," said Harriet, "it makes no dif-

ference to *me* ; only you promised Miss Illingworth, and—I——”

“It is decided, Harriet,” interrupted I; “I stay.”

“There’s a dear good brother,” said Harriet; “but isn’t my father gone a long time?”

“I do not think so,” said I; “if he were to stay ten times as long, so that you did not follow him, I shouldn’t care.”

“No,” answered she, “nor I, if I did not think that some unpleasant feeling existed between——”

At this moment the gentle heart of the affectionate daughter was relieved of all its apprehensions by the return of her “Pa,” humming one of his favourite tunes as he came across the hall, and who entered the room smiling as the dawn.

“My old lady is a little out of humour,” said he, resuming his seat, “about Harriet’s staying out so late; however, I have set all that to rights—it is all sunshine now—and so now for my toddy.”

“I am sure,” said his daughter, “if Mamma disapproves of it, I will never offend again—I hope she is quite sure of that—indeed I shall have no——”

I was on thorns—she was going to say—I knew she was—“no inducement to stop looking at the moon after to-morrow;” luckily she did not conclude her sentence, for the exemplary toddy-maker stopped her short in her quite needless explanation, by repeating, “Sure of that? aye, that she is—so am I—say no more about it, dear.—Gurney, some grog?—come, no ceremony, help yourself—push the sugar to him, Harriet—make yourself useful—as I say, Gurney, I hate your automaton—everything in its time—all things in their season—I like to see *my* girls useful as well as ornamental.”

I confess I was not quite of that opinion—I hated to see women do anything but sit still and hear their own praises; even the exertion necessary to the display of accomplishments I considered too great for the delicate creatures who

adorn the world. However, I made a sort of affirmative noise, and Harriet, who seemed to foresee a lengthened sitting, from the joyous and social temper of her father, made what is called a move; she went through the ceremonies previously observed by her respected mother, and I performed the same offices regarding the candle as I had executed for the elder lady, the only difference being, that when, instead of a cross repulsive frown which Mrs. Wells had bestowed upon me in return, I received one of Harriet's gentlest and sweetest smiles, my little finger somehow became strangely entangled with her's in the handle of the candlestick—I extricated it, and we shook hands—she kissed her father's forehead and cheek, and retired. Little did I anticipate the sequel.

“That's as good a girl as ever lived, Gurney,” said her father, as she shut the door—
“help yourself—she has not a fault that I know of.”

I bowed assent.

“Are you really going to leave us?” said he; “you find us dull—what are you going to do after you return to town?”

I told him my future plans, and we were insensibly drawn into a lengthened conversation, which lasted upwards of an hour, as it subsequently proved; during which time we had drunk a very considerable quantity of whisky toddy, which my excellent host had undertaken to make, not only for himself, but me. I had called a halt with the brandy and water, which he advised me never to drink weak, as deleterious; and after that, upon his earnest persuasion, I submitted myself to be toddyized according to his will and pleasure.

It was about one o'clock in the morning. I recollect the candles on the table had grown very short, and the wicks remarkably long, when, while preparing my third tumbler, Mr. Wells recurred to what, it was clear, was a very favourite subject.

“I wonder, Gurney, you don't marry,” said

he; "rely upon it, as I said at supper, there is nothing gives a man a place in the world so respectably as an early marriage—just taste that; is it strong enough? no, a leetle drop more—it settles a man—is it good?"

"Excellent," said I, sipping what appeared to me to be aqua-fortis and sugar, but which, from its colourless appearance, looked as weak as water.

"Have you ever turned the subject over in your mind?" said Wells—"ever seriously thought of fixing?"

"Sometimes I have," said I—and the faces and figures of Miss Emma Haines, and Mrs. Fletcher Green, flitted before my eyes—"but I see no chance, even if I resolved upon the measure, of realizing my wish."

"Why so, Gilbert? why so?—you don't drink, man, eh—why so?"

"Why, you see, Sir," said I, "I have no fortune adequate to the support of an establishment, and I——"

"Fortune!" said mine host, swallowing a

comfortable draught of his own mixture—"what has fortune to do with it? You have a profession, if you choose to follow it; as a single man you have no need of more income than you have, and therefore you do not pursue it; if you had a wife, you would."

"I might," said I, "but there are very few parents, I suspect, who would permit me to marry their daughters upon such a principle."

"I differ with you there, Gurney," said Mr. Wells; "my notion is, give a girl a good husband—and I call a clever, honourable man a good husband—hang the money,—give her a good husband, the man whom she loves, and all will go well: it will be all sunshine, and shine the sun does, alike upon the cottage and the palace."

"It is not every man who entertains such liberal principles as you do," said I.

"Well, but what does that matter?" replied my friend. "Come,—come, finish that glass, and let me make you another—look! don't you see I have finished mine, eh? What, as I say,

signifies that? One parent of these opinions is enough, if that parent finds one young man of his way of thinking. Now, for instance, supposing any man were to make an offer to my dear child, Harriet,—the sweetest girl in the world *I* think—a treasure to any human being who may be happy enough to win her,—if she liked him and said Aye, do you think I should say No, because he was not rich? Give me your tumbler.”

Saying which, he replenished the huge vessel which I had thrice emptied.

“But perhaps,” continued he, “Harriet is not after *your* taste, and you would say in reply to my observation, that it was quite natural I should be glad to take the first that came—but that is not the case. Harriet has not been unwooed, although she has not yet, that I know of, been won. Of course, opinions on such matters differ; and although I think her everything that is amiable, you may not.”

“Indeed, Sir,” said I, with sincere warmth, “I have the highest opinion of Miss Wells;

nobody can admire her more than I do; nobody can more justly appreciate her excellent qualities."

"'Pon your life!" said Wells; "really—are you serious? Why then—why the deuce don't you come to the point?—you know *my* feelings on the subject—why not marry her?"

"Sir," said I, startled at the course the conversation had taken, and seeing through a sort of halo round the candles two Messrs. Wells sitting opposite to me, "I never ventured to allow myself to think of such a thing. I——"

"But why not, my dear friend?" said he—"have you tasted the new glass, eh?—come, you don't like it—taste and try, eh? Why not think of Harriet, hey?"

"Why, Sir," said I, in a faltering tone, "if I ever did think upon the subject, it would be absurd in me to put forward my pretensions—she would never consent."

"Do you think not, Gilbert?" exclaimed he, "then I think very differently—I do, by Jove

—I think she is very fond of you ; and I think that the cause of my old lady's snappishness to-night is her having made the discovery. I can see through a mill-stone as well as my neighbours—I could have told her that myself a fortnight ago—but what does it matter ? why should I interfere ? I said to myself, if Harriet like Gilbert, and Gilbert like Harriet, I am sure I have no objection, eh?—come, you don't drink.”

“ Sir,” said I, “ I really am not conscious—”

“ Conscious,” said Wells ; “ come, none of your nonsense. Old birds, Master Gilbert, are not to be caught with chaff. Do you make me believe, that either my girl or you care three straws what the moon is made of ? or that when you go out in the garden astronomizing, you look at any stars but her eyes ? No, no—the fact is, she is very fond of you, and you are very fond of her.”

“ I have already expressed my opinion of Harriet,” said I, “ and certainly am not disposed to retract a word I have said.”

“You are a good fellow,” said Wells; “a fine, honourable fellow; and I like to hear you call her Harriet.”

“You are too kind,” continued I; “but whatever those feelings may be, I am quite sure it would be useless for me to expect a return.”

“Useless!” interrupted he; “why useless? I tell you the girl is over head and ears in love with you. Now, that’s the truth.”

“In that case,” said I, “my happiness would be complete.”

“Would it?” exclaimed the animated father; “then, by Jove, you shall secure immediate felicity. Wait a moment—finish your toddy. You shall have the confession from her own lips.”

“The ladies are gone to bed,” said I, somewhat startled at the promptitude of his proceeding.

“No matter,” replied he, lighting his candle, “nothing like the time present—strike while the iron’s hot. We’ll see who’s right—finish

your toddy—that's all. I'll be back in a few minutes."

And away he went, sure enough, leaving me in a sort of maze—a kind of wonderment, at what possibly could have brought about the event which had just occurred, and what would be the next step in the proceeding.

In a minute, I heard my excellent friend in the room overhead—his own bed-chamber;—a slight murmuring followed his arrival; presently, I heard the sound of feet pattering and paddling over the floor; then I heard them along a lobby, at the end of which was Harriet's apartment. Everything was still—it was two o'clock in the morning. I heard the door of her room open—I heard my friend again in his own room; then I heard some more scuffling and pattering about, and the door of Harriet's room shut—and then came a pause, and a murmuring—and I finished my glass of toddy. I could not go away, for Wells said he was coming back again. What I was to stay for I knew not; yet, in that jocose

vein in which I indulged in other days, I contented myself with quoting Gay, in a whisper, and muttered—

“The wretch of *toddy* may be happy to-morrow.”

Little did I think how close at hand my happiness was.

I had—what with listening and wondering—fallen into a purgatorial state of intermediacy between sleeping and waking, when I was recalled to the entire possession of my senses, (under the operation, always be it understood, of the happy compound which my excellent host had so admirably made, and so liberally administered,) by the opening of the dinner-room door, and the appearance of Mr. Wells, of Mrs. Wells, and of Miss Wells; the two latter evidently in a state of amiable dishabille,—the elder lady looking excessively goodnatured, and the younger one seeming ready to sink under the effects of her extraordinary re-appearance in the parlour. I instinctively rose—reeled a little round—saved myself, by catching the back of my chair—and

saw, what I never expected to see, two Harriets: as this duplication had previously occurred with regard to her respectable father, I was a good deal puzzled.

“Sit down, dear Gilbert,” said Wells. “Sally, my love,” continued he, addressing his better half, “Gilbert has declared his feelings towards Harriet—Who’s right now, old lady?—He loves her, and she——”

“Dear Papa,” said poor Miss Wells, “what *do* you mean?”

“I mean all that is good,” replied Wells. “Sarah, my love, let us step into the drawing-room for a few minutes, and Gilbert will tell her what *he* means.”

“I mean, Sir,” said I——

“*I* know what you mean, my dear fellow—you have told me that already,” said Papa. “Ask *her* the question—that’s all.”

“And don’t be long, Mr. Gurney,” said Mrs. Wells, “for I am afraid the poor dear girl will catch cold.”

And, having made their speeches, this respect-

able couple disappeared in a moment. I winked my eyes—they were gone—I concluded through the door-way; but, for all I saw of their exit, they might have gone up the chimney. When they were fairly out of the room, Harriet—who seemed to me to be quite aware of my extraordinary and unusual elevation of spirits—said, in her gentlest tone of voice, “What does all this mean, Gilbert—why have you sent for me?—I am only half awake—but it does seem most extraordinary—why are we here?”

“Upon my word,” said I, endeavouring to see through what appeared to be a thick fog, and trying to speak plain, despite of what seemed some grievous impediment, “I don’t know, Harriet; your father——,”—there I faltered, and she began to cry. I “mooned” out, that my sympathetic ignorance of the object of our dialogue had wounded her feelings—I would not have given her a moment’s pain for a goldmine. “Your father,” I resumed, “told me that——,” hereabouts I forgot what he *had* told

me, "that—if I were to—offer myself to you as a husband—you would not refuse me."

The look she gave me I never shall forget—it was like the sun clearing away the morning mist: there was a mixture of pleasure—of surprise—of doubt—of melancholy, in the expression of her countenance, well suited to our extraordinary position—she gazed at me for a moment steadily.

"Gilbert," said she, sobbing, "I am sure you have too much honour, too much kindness, too much feeling, to say this if you are not in earnest; is it for this I have been brought here? What can I say? Oh! my wild, thoughtless father—my pride—my—what does it mean—I am sure you would not trifle with me?"

How could I?—a warm-hearted, amiable, excellent girl; and oh! how like volcanoes covered with snow are the cold-mannered, placid, quiet creatures, whose fire is all within! She was alone with me—her feelings excited—my affection brought out, like the doubtful

colouring of some suspected master, by the varnish of Wells's whisky—the result was inevitable.

“Harriet,” said I, catching her round the waist, and “scaling,” after my usual fashion, the preliminaries on her lips, “your father is mistaken, you will not—I know you will not—accept me!”

She said not a word. Her head dropped on my shoulder, and her hand rested in mine. I sealed again—the door opened, and in walked Mr. and Mrs. Wells!

“I told you so, Gilbert—I told you so,” said Wells. Harriet disentangled herself from my bold embrace, and, followed by Mrs. Wells, quitted the room; not, however, before the elderly lady had patted my head in a most flattering manner.

“I told you so, Gurney,” said Wells. “Come, one more glass—health, happiness, and prosperity—son-in-law, pledge me!”

By the ingenious contrivance of a spirit-lamp under his huge silver kettle, Wells retained enough of the caloric to keep it up at a proper

temperature, even though the servants were gone to bed. I bowed assent, for I confess I was rather overcome; and we commenced our fresh and last glass standing; or rather sitting, in an extremely different relation to each other from that on which we stood earlier in the evening, when Harriet and I were on the gravel-walk, talking about the moon, and my reverend friend was in the *bosquet*, listening to us.

The conversation did not flow rapidly or freely; the "Of course, Gilbert, you will come to breakfast!" sounded more like a claim than an invitation—a result, rather than an impulse; and as for talking of Harriet, now irrevocably my own, it seemed to me a matter of impossibility. Wells once or twice patted my shoulder, and once took my hand into his, and sipped a sort of paternal "God bless you, my boy," to which I replied in the same spirit; and so we went on until it was three o'clock, and the sun, which had set while I was yet wholly disengaged—a Platonic friend of Miss Wells—a bachelor, free as a bee, to sip and rove, and rove and sip

—had risen upon me, a pledged and accepted lover. It seemed strange—rather pleasant, but extremely wrong; however, I thought silence the safest course, and therefore held my tongue; and when I was quietly “let out” by my intended father-in-law, to make my way to the house of my neglected and much-injured friends, with whom I fancied myself staying, he gave me just such a pat on the shoulder as his exemplary lady had bestowed upon my head, and I found myself, in a bright summer morning, measuring the breadth, rather than the length, of my road to Nubley’s hospitable mansion.

This may hereafter seem improbable and unnatural, but, nevertheless, it is true—it is a fact—an incident which, as will appear in the sequel, led to many others. I confess, as I wended my way from Wells’s, I began to reflect and to think, but with that sort of maudlin wisdom with which men are uniformly possessed under similar circumstances. However, I wound up all my calculations with one conclusive remark made to myself, but in audible voice—“What is done,

cannot be undone—Harriet is mine for ever!” and I clasped my hands, and stamped my feet, as I went along, as if she were there, and saw and heard me.

I reached Chittagong Lodge—the family had been buried in sleep for hours—I felt ashamed at being so late, and when I slipped and stumbled up the staircase, consoled myself with thinking that I was doing it on purpose. I entered my room, and threw myself on the bed; and there I lay, overcome by sleep and fatigue of mind—nor did I wake until my servant came to fetch my clothes, when I was disturbed by the noise he made, and found myself, at nine o’clock in the morning, recumbent on the quilt, dressed as I was, when I came home, and betrothed to Miss Harriet Wells.

When the man had left the room, evidently very much astonished at finding me as I was, I began to revolve in my mind the events which had occurred during the past evening and night. I perfectly recollected the extraordinary scene which had been performed, and felt conscious

of the responsibility which I had taken upon myself—nor was I, in the slightest degree, affected by it; because I was sure that Harriet was a loveable creature, and that, after all, as Mr. Wells had said, matrimony did give a man a place and respectability; and that I should be delighted, whenever the moon shone, to walk about with my dear blue-eyed girl, and look at it, and talk about it; and then she was such an affectionate daughter, there could be no doubt but she would make a kind, dutiful wife; and she was such a kind sister, that she must make a tender mother, and so on; and I was charmed with the prospect, until I began to consider, what I always had considered before when in my sober senses, the power of three hundred and ninety pounds a-year to afford those comforts, not to say luxuries of life, which a well-bred woman absolutely requires.

“Of course,” said I to myself, “as I never made any disguise of the smallness of my income, Mr. Wells must intend to put us at least beyond the difficulties of the world; and if he contributes

an equal sum to my own income, I *do* think, with management, something like eight hundred a-year will do—a cottage—a cow—and content; nothing can be more charming, and more rational.” And so, by the time I had changed my costume, in order to breakfast with “the family,” I had worked myself up into the belief that the thing would answer; always, however, with a *proviso*, that the events which I had registered in my mind of the previous evening had not occurred in a dream, instead of being realities.

I scarcely knew how to excuse myself from Mr. and Mrs. Nubley at breakfast: however, as the thing was done, in the course of the day I should be able to make one general apology for my apparent ill-breeding, in passing so much of my time at the Wellses'; and I resolved to make my retreat as early as possible, so as to avoid the questions of my kind host, or the significant looks of his lady, who, I knew, was perfectly aware of that of which I myself was utterly unconscious,—namely, that I had been caught. Harriet was an interesting creature, and that is

the truth of it, and Mrs. Nubley was too cunning in such matters not to see what was going on. What may be thought of Mr. Wells's conduct, I know not; but I have seriously reflected upon it very frequently since. However, it was *une affaire finie*, and so away I went, looking like a simpleton, and feeling like a fool, to be received in his house as the affianced husband of his darling daughter.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN I reached my reverend father-in-law's residence,—I felt a sensation to which I had, up to that period, been a stranger. The reality of the last night's proceedings, which came over me in a sort of cold shiver, at finding myself all at once as it were, one of a family of which I knew but little, and of which, however generally agreeable, some of the members might, for all I knew, be unfavourably distinguished by some unpleasant circumstance which had not yet reached my ears, made me rather nervous. But this was nothing compared to what I experienced when I went into the billiard-room and found Harriet there. I could not define the

sentiment which occupied and overcame me. There she was; her eyes beaming with their usual softness, her bosom heaving, the colour flickering on her cheeks, and her pretty ringlets flowing over her snowy forehead as usual; but the thing that struck me as so excessively odd was, that they were all mine,—that *she* was mine—my own,—and that I might press her in my arms, and feel her heart beat, and kiss away the tear which glistened in her eye, and twist and untwist her curls just as I pleased, with nobody on earth to find fault with me. I felt just as if I had bought a new toy at a very large price. It was very agreeable; yet somehow the zest of the thing was gone,—I had caught my hare,—the chase was over,—doubts and fears, if I ever had any, were ended,—and the future Mrs. Gurney came bounding to meet me, evidently expecting that sort of welcome which I was much too well-bred to refuse her: but it was *so* odd!—four-and-twenty hours before, she would have frowned at me and looked cross, if I had caught her in my arms. I do

not think she would have cried out, but she would have *seemed* to be angry; and now, simply because I had imbibed two or three extra glasses of whisky-punch with her reverend father the night before, there she was, as kind and as coming as could be!

I was very much at a loss for a subject of conversation. I had never carried my amative-ness, upon any former occasion, to so advanced a stage, and I did not know exactly what I could now say to interest her. Of course making professions or declarations would be superfluous. I had already made the last and most decisive declaration man *can* make, and one which it was quite clear I should not have made if I had not been devoted to her. I thought the best thing I could do was to walk her out into the garden, and give her a little exercise before breakfast. I proposed a stroll, and she of course assented,—and there we roved and rambled, I with my arm encircling her taper waist, and not saying one syllable. We were what the truly poetic call, lost in the ecstasy of our own feelings,

and we did nothing but sigh and look at each other, except that I occasionally pressed her closer to my side—the side on which my heart lay, and that, whenever I did so, she affectedly turned her head the other way, and muttered, “don’t.”

It is very wrong, I dare say, to put such a fact to paper, but I do honestly declare that I felt as if I had done something extremely foolish, if not absolutely wrong, in permitting Mr. Wells to bring the affair to so speedy a conclusion. What the deuce was I to do with a wife now I had got one? I had never spoken of her fortune, for I never cared about money; but, supposing, with all his eloquent flourishes about liberality, and independence, and all the rest of it, the Rev. Mr. Wells had neither the inclination nor the ability to give Harriet anything by way of portion, what was to be done? And then, when children came—as come they naturally would—matters would be worse. I really was not happy. I felt something like a fly in a honey-pot, over head and ears in sweets,

but terribly puzzled how to get out of the scrape into which it was quite clear I had gotten myself.

Somehow I did not quite admire the alteration in Harriet's manner. I became restless and fidgety. I saw faults in her which I had not previously observed; and all at once I said to myself, "Dear me, dear me, and this is the being to whom I am to cleave for life, who is to be my companion eternally, and to be taken with me wherever I go! I wonder how she would look in a London drawing-room, and what people would think and say of her!" And then I suddenly dropped from this train of wonderment and sensitive delicacy, into a desponding course of reflection that, in all probability, with our pecuniary means, we should neither of us have an opportunity of exhibiting ourselves in the higher circles, unless they chanced to be the higher *circles* of the play-houses.

Harriet saw that my mind was occupied with various thoughts, and perhaps wondered that I

did not somehow touch upon the fact of our nuptials, or express an ardent anxiety for naming the day. It may seem very strange, but for the life of me I could not allude to the subject. Once or twice I thought she was going to say something about it herself, or about the scene of the preceding night, and whenever she seemed going to speak, I had recourse to my happy expedient, of giving her a gentle squeeze, and drawing her towards me, which had the immediate effect of checking her observation, and inducing her to say "don't," and turn away her head.

The seasonable appearance of Mrs. Wells and the two younger girls, put a period to the most embarrassing *tête-à-tête* in which I had ever been engaged. The old lady—I mean the mother of Harriet, for old she was not, except by comparison—was all smiles and good humour; and Fanny, who had evidently been made acquainted with all the occurrences of the preceding evening, gave me a look which I shall never forget,—indeed there was so much

of archness about it, that I thought to myself I had never seen her look either so pretty or so intellectual before.

“Our papa is but just up,” said Miss Wells.

“Our papa !”

“You gave him too much whisky-punch, Gilbert, last night,” said Mrs. Wells.

“He helped himself,” said I.

“And *you* too,” said Harriet, with a look which I did *not* like.

“Yes,” said I. “It is seldom that I am betrayed into such excesses. I scarcely recollect how I got home.”

“I saw no symptoms of your excess,” said Mrs. Wells, “when we last parted. It must have been after *that*, if you did exceed.”

I saw the drift of all this; but I affected blindness, and complained of a headache.

“That accounts for your dulness,” said Harriet.

“I am not conscious,” said I, “that I am dull. I have been thinking——”

“Quite right, too, Gilbert,” said Mrs. Wells. “The cares of the world are coming upon you now; it is quite right to think.”

“What cares, Ma’?” said Fanny, bursting out into a most unseemly laugh.

Harriet coloured crimson, and fired one of the fiercest frowns she could command at sister Fanny.

“Fanny, dear,” said her mother, who seemed to think that I should disapprove of the expedition with which the intelligence of my capture had been spread through the family, “run in and see if Mr. Wells is down stairs yet; he told me he should be ready for breakfast in a quarter of an hour.”

And away went the laughing Fan.

“I suppose,” said Mrs. Wells, “that papa and you will want to have a long *cause* this morning, and I think it will be as well if I and the girls go and call upon the Nubleys.”

“When is the ball, Harriet?” said I.

“To-morrow night,” replied the future Mrs. Gurney.

“And I am to dance with Miss Illingworth?” asked I.

“To be sure, if you please,” replied Miss Wells, evidently piqued.

“You told me it was an engagement,” said I.

“To be sure!” replied Harriet. “And I am engaged to dance with Lieutenant Merman of the 45th every dance for the evening.” These words were enunciated in a most determined manner, and their delivery was succeeded by a burst of tears.

I did not know that I had done anything to outrage my little wife’s feelings; but, from what I saw, it seemed that the change in my position which had been wrought in six or seven hours was most extraordinary.

“I am sure,” said Mrs. Wells, “my dear Harriet, you are not engaged to Lieutenant Merman, or whatever you call him, in any such way.”

“Well, Ma,” said Harriet, “if I am not, I might be, and may be if I like; and if Gilbert goes and dances with that odious Miss Illing-

worth, I have just as much right to dance with Henry."

This statement of rights I confess did not please me; nor did I admire Miss Illingworth's being called odious, in whose praise and cause Harriet had been, the night before, most eloquent; neither did I admire the familiar manner in which she spoke of the gallant Lieutenant as Henry.

"I am sure, Harriet," said I, "I have no wish to dance with Miss Illingworth, nor should I ever have thought of such a thing, had you not told me that I ought to do so; and in order to oblige *you*, I proposed fulfilling what you represented to me to be my promise."

"I might have said so yesterday," said Harriet; "but circumstances are changed. Miss Illingworth can't think you have any serious intentions with regard to her now; and, for my part, *I* would rather not go to the ball at all."

"What!" said I, "and abandon Henry?"

Mrs. Wells, who saw that there were certain

clouds rising in the horizon, thought it wisest to put an end to this little discussion, in which Harriet's temper did not appear to quite so much advantage as it might have done, and hurried us towards the house, where the ever-volatile Wells was ready to receive us.

Mr. Wells was a specimen of the order to which he belonged, by no means favourable as regards its sacred character, but he was an excessively pleasant person, and always contrived to make his house agreeable, and his visitors not only pleased with himself and his family, but, which is infinitely more satisfactory, pleased with themselves. I saw his failings; I disliked the levity with which he occasionally treated serious subjects; I was aware that his practice was not in accordance with his preaching, and I saw several venial faults in his general character, but I felt quite sure that he had a very high opinion of *me*, and that he never was so well pleased as when *I* was his guest. So, I believe, thought every one of his ordinary acquaintances.

“ Gilbert, how are you after the punch, eh?” cried the reverend Bacchanalian. “ Well, I hope?—Punch of my brewing is always wholesome,—not a headache in a hogshead of it. Give us your hand. I am delighted to see you. Harriet, kiss me, dearest: I presume I am not the first so favoured on this auspicious morning?”

Harriet looked towards me, I thought somewhat reproachfully, as if she thought my ardour had not been quite so conspicuous as it might have been.

“ Come, old lady,” continued the pastor, “ give us our breakfast. Fanny, love, how dost do? Where’s my little Betsy,—my Bettina?”

And hereabouts Fanny and her plump junior saluted their reverend sire, who speedily ensconced himself in his armed chair; and as we all sat down round the table, his face brightening with an expression of extreme delight, he first smacked his hands, and then rubbed them, and then exclaimed, “ Here we are,—a happy family-party !”

While the ungraceful process of egg-eating,

tongue-demolishing, and tea-drinking is going on, it may not be amiss to give one anecdote of my intended father-in-law which may serve to throw some light upon his character. It seems that, in the outset of his clerical career, (for he first started in life as a lawyer,) he found it difficult to get rid of his lay habits, and not unfrequently an oath mingled in the volumes of words which issued from his lips, added to which he maintained an ancient custom of his, of frequenting races, and betting to a considerable amount. These proceedings made some noise in the village where his preferment lay, and at length a complaint was lodged with his diocesan, who, with the generosity and impartiality of a great and good man, resolved at once to send for him, tell him what the allegations were, which were made against him, and leave it to his own sense and feeling to correct what in his new sacerdotal character was, in point of fact, extremely censurable conduct.

Wells, somewhat flurried by the episcopal summons, and judging, "conscience-stricken,"

that it originated in some complaint from his parishioners, repaired to the Bishop's palace with anything but agreeable feelings upon the occasion. He described to me the sort of nervous agitation which he experienced while pulling the heavy bell which was to summon the porter to the prelate's gate. He consoled himself, however, by the reflection, that all unpleasant interviews are infinitely worse in imagination than in reality, and sent in his name with the resolution of one determined to bear with meekness and resignation the infliction for which he had, in truth, been a little prepared, by the conversations which had, more than once or twice, taken place in his neighbourhood between the more rigid of his flock, and which had been repeated to him by some exceedingly goodnatured friends.

The Bishop, a man of exemplary piety of character, and lamb-like meekness of manner, received him with that sort of bland and paternal kindness which a surgeon, who is about to cut off the leg of a highly-distinguished patient,

exhibits to his victim,—a kind of encouraging gentleness, which may strengthen him up to bear the slashing cuts, which, for the salvation of his life, he proposes in a few minutes after to inflict upon him. He begged him to be seated; hoped he had not inconvenienced him by requesting him to call, and hoped that Mrs. Wells and his daughter—he then had but one—were well. Wells felt soothed and re-assured, and began almost to think that he had been mistaken in the object of his Lordship's letter, and that, instead of a reprimand, he was going to give him a stall in his cathedral. He was soon undeceived.

“Mr. Wells,” said the Bishop, “it is, of all things in the world, the most unpleasant to censure; and I do assure you, it is because I have a high regard for you, and a high opinion of you, that I have sent for you hither to say a few words, which, I am quite sure,—at least if I know anything of your real character,—will obviate the necessity of any further steps on *my* part. What I refer to are some reports which

have reached me, I can scarcely say officially, but which have been forwarded to me by a party in your parish, who incline, conscientiously, I am sure, to a more rigid course of living than men of the world are generally apt to pursue; and these persons throw out that an evil impression is given to the parish by your inconsiderately—I am sure—devoting a great portion of your time to sporting matters, and a habit of using, during such occupation, oaths to a considerable extent. Now, my dear Mr. Wells,” said his Lordship, stopping my respectable father-in-law, who was about to interrupt him, “be assured that no Bishop hates meddling with the private conduct of the subordinate clergy of his diocese more than I; and it is not in the character of diocesan, but of friend, that I have taken this opportunity of warning you of the existence of those opinions and feelings, and of suggesting an alteration in the tone and tendency of your recreations, which may effectually put a stop to such observations and remarks.”

“My Lord,” said Wells, “I really have no words to thank you for this kindness. I am quite sensible of the errors which your Lordship has so justly, so properly, and so considerately pointed out to me. You are aware that I have not long embraced the profession which I have now chosen, and that habits of early days are difficult to shake off, but rely upon it that from this moment they end; you shall never again have occasion to say one word upon the subject, nor shall my enemies have an opportunity of attracting your Lordship’s attention to any levities of a similar character.”

“Don’t say another word,” said the Bishop: “I have treated you as a friend, and I rejoice to see that you take my interference in good part. I thought you would, and I have not been deceived; and now, Mr. Wells,” continued his Lordship, “as our business is over, come into the next room, and take some luncheon.”

Wells described his delight at the mildness and moderation of the Bishop’s reproof, and quite fascinated with the kind and hospitable

conduct which formed the sequel, he too gladly accepted his Lordship's invitation, and a few minutes more found them seated at a table, upon which were placed dishes in sufficient number and variety to deserve the name of dinner.

The conversation assumed a general character, and the Bishop having set the example, Wells drank one or two glasses of wine, the Bishop telling him that, as far as *he* was concerned, *that* was the only meal he enjoyed, the late dinners of society not agreeing either with his appetite or constitution. Wells found the prelate alive to the mirth of his pleasant sallies, and encouraged by his Lordship's smiles, went on describing a variety of incidents and circumstances in his happiest vein, until at last touching upon the subject (which very much interested the particular quarter of the county in which his living was situated) of a marriage said to be in agitation between a certain Sir Harry Lackinfield and a Miss Strombersley, a great heiress in those parts, the Bishop said he was perfectly con-

vinced it would take place before the next Christmas.

“I don’t think so, my Lord,” said Wells, who knew the match was off.

“I do,” said the Bishop; “and I have tolerably good grounds for my belief.”

“I’ll be d—d,” exclaimed Wells, “if I don’t bet your Lordship five to two that it never comes off at all.”

“As this, I presume,” said the Bishop, rising from table, “is to be the last bet you ever intend to make, I will not rob you by accepting your offer, and leaving you without a chance of revenge. Good morning, Sir; you have my best wishes and sincere hopes of a desirable change in your proceedings: the evident difficulty of correcting confirmed habits will, I am sure, induce you to pay particular attention to my friendly suggestions.” Saying which, his Lordship rang the bell, Mr. Wells descended the stairs, mounted his horse, and rode home.

This little anecdote will pretty well serve to

explain the real character of Mr. Wells, who although as far as I knew or could see, was not chargeable with any flagrant impropriety, was, I must admit, of a class of clergymen infinitely more numerous in my younger days than since. Within the last four-and-twenty years, the tone of character and the manners of our spiritual pastors and masters have undergone a most striking and advantageous change. It sounds odd, and even absurd to say so, but true it is, that religion has become fashionable, and its cultivation and pursuits have taken place of what in the days of our grandfathers were called spirit and humour, which, in plain English, meant profligacy and dissipation. No midnight broils now break the public peace, no feats of drinking are recorded in our periodical papers, as matters of admiration. It is no longer thought brave to beat the watch, nor considered extremely wise to break the lamps: quiet lodgers are now never roused from their slumbers by bell-ringsings of the "Tonsonian school," nor are waiters thrown out of tavern windows, and charged in the bill.

To the mere off-scourings of society are these performances now confined ; indeed, so peculiarly marked are the few remaining professors of such absurdities, that it is common to see posted up by the parish authorities notices to “Lamp-breakers and others,” thereby clearly proving that such persons are a totally distinct race of themselves.

If these outward signs of change in manners are so evident, still more so are those by which society, of a more refined character, is distinguished. Piety, charity, sympathy, and benevolence are its attributes, and the esteem and best affections of those whose affections and esteem are worth possessing, are acquired by the unaffected exercise of moral and religious duties, unaccompanied by the artificial and over-strained puritanism which, not unfrequently, like its very antipodes charity, “covers a multitude of sins.” In these days a profligate parson is an object of hatred and contempt, and the same influence which has worked the beneficial changes to which I refer, has produced that general alteration in

social life which has sobered and chastened the rakes and bullies of other times into accomplished gentlemen cultivating the arts and sciences, redeeming hours of agreeable and rational conversation from the service of the bottle; who see neither wit in immorality, nor wisdom in profaneness; and yet perceive no crime in mirth and gaiety, nor any gloom in the observances of religion.

I was led into these reflections by the account which Mr. Wells gave me after breakfast, which seemed to me to last longer than usual, of his change of profession from the law to the Church, and which he seemed resolved to confide to me, together with some more minute particulars of his early life, which, although strongly illustrative of my position as to the superior state of public morality in later days, I do not think would be either edifying or acceptable to the reader of my notes, let him be whom he might.

“I was called to the Bar,” said my reverend friend, “knowing but little of law—went the circuit—got no business;—never left the Hall

during term—got no business there—in town or out of town just the same—wouldn't do. Went next circuit, and there saw my inestimable Sarah, then pretty, young, and amiable—with a tolerable fortune, and niece to a bishop. I made my offer—accepted by the young lady—frowned upon by the old.”

My reverend father-in-law's case seemed very like my own.

“I talked of industry,” continued Wells, “and argued earnestly on my yet favourite topic of the stimulus to exertion, and my conviction of happiness, content, and all *that*, till at last I got a conditional hearing from Sally's mother, Mrs. Grimsthorpe. She had spoken to her brother-in-law, the Bishop—he met me at dinner—I spoke before him in a subdued tone. I was then on promotion, and our meeting was followed by an interview, in which—not, perhaps, very flattering to my talents—he told me very candidly he did not think I should make much figure at the Bar, but that if I made up my mind to take orders, he would do whatever he

could—having no family of his own—to push my interest.

“The proposition pleased me. I did not stop to consider my fitness or unfitness for the important change; all I looked at in the affair, I saw as a lover sees, who is not quite blind, except when his mistress is actually the object. It was evident to me that I should never get a living by the law; it was equally clear that I *should* get one in the Church; and, therefore, without a moment’s hesitation, I jumped at the Prelate’s offer, and submitted myself to his directions for my future guidance.

“The difficulties in my way were few. I had graduated at Cambridge—I was to be furnished with a title, my own good Bishop was to ordain me, and that ceremony was very shortly to be followed by another, which was to unite me to the object of my affections, so soon as any piece of preferment fell vacant, which might give me a home to take her to; for up to the moment of the relinquishment of my secular pursuits, I occupied chambers, on the third

floor of Hare Court, in the Temple, ‘a shady, blest retreat,’ not well calculated for the residence of one so good, so amiable, and tenderly-reared, as Sarah Grimsthorpe, who was then the very picture of our dear Harriet !”

I wished, devoutly, that my excellent friend had not given me the last piece of information. Nothing is so terrible as to see a woman hideous in face, unwieldy in person, and coarse in features, walking with a daughter, fair, slim, sylph-like and symmetrical, but who bears just sufficient resemblance to her Gorgon-like parent to convince one, that when she comes to be as old as her mother, she will be her very counterpart. Mrs. Wells was, for her standing in life, a very respectable-looking lady ; but, to live for twenty, or five-and-twenty years, watching the progress of my pretty Harriet, till at last she should reach the maternal standard of age and size, seemed to me to be a dreadful anticipation. However, I believe I was wrong,—constant, habitual association deprives these evils of their importance ; —youth goes, and age comes so gradually and

imperceptibly, that the change, so visible to other eyes, is not made evident to those who suffer it; else why should Mr. Wells himself have proposed, that very day, that his wife and daughter should have two dresses made of the same material, and in the same fashion?—However, I listened to his adventures with attention, hoping to reap some instruction in the end.

“Well,” continued he, “having completed my metamorphosis, and become a deacon and a curate, I commenced doing duty. I confess I was a good deal alarmed at the sound of my own voice in reading; but when I came to preach, the recollection that there was no counsel on the other side to reply, put me somewhat at my ease—my good patron had lent me a sermon for the occasion, which turned out very effective, as I was told, although the omission of several pages in the middle of it, which I had unfortunately left at home by accident, rendered it not quite so connected as it might have been if I had had it all: the mishap, however, had the effect of shortening it, which, perhaps, contributed to

please the parishioners, some of whom, as it were, “slept, or seemed to sleep,” not much admiring the practice of parsons who treat their texts as Dido did the hide, and lengthen them out until they encompass a very Byrsa of time.

“With all decent speed,” continued Wells, “my patron ordained me priest; and never shall I forget the kind manner in which he addressed me upon the evening after my admission to that rank. ‘Mr. Wells,’ said he, ‘you are now placed—henceforth it becomes your own affair to push yourself. I have given you my pledge that the first piece of preferment which falls, in *my* gift, shall be yours; but mark me—I have observed in your character something like carelessness of your own interests,—a dilatoriness,—a procrastination; recollect, that much of your success will depend upon your own activity. Very often, vacancies occur in livings, of which I do not hear for several days; other people are on the alert; and even before I have been made aware that I had the power to bestow the preferment, I have received applications from high

quarters, which must be attended to, unless I have actually given away the benefice; therefore, be vigilant,—keep your eyes about you, and the moment you hear of a living dropping, start off directly to me; for I do assure you, seeing how much attached you and my niece are to each other, I am most anxious to put you in a situation to marry, although I entirely agree with her mother in the prudential postponement of your union until you have a home of your own, and are, in fact, established.”

“I need not add,” said Wells, “that I not only promised punctual obedience to his Lordship’s instructions, but that I rigidly practised the course he recommended. I made a constant round of visits of inquiry after the health of all the most ancient incumbents in the diocese, and found, to my infinite dissatisfaction, that they were all uncommonly well; and this salubrious state of things continued for several months, during which period I was placed in the extremely unpleasant position of what is called ‘waiting for dead men’s shoes.’ At last, my suspense ended:

one day in January—sharp frost—‘an eager and a nipping air’—I was on horseback, crossing Glanberry Hill—I heard the toll of a church bell, when, casting my eye—as a fisherman would his bait, without the hope of a bite—into the valley below, there I saw—what—what do you think?”

“I cannot guess,” said I.

“A funeral, wending its way out of Glanberry Parsonage towards the church door; the effect of the black procession upon the white snow was most remarkable. Glanberry was worth 800*l.* a-year, and in the Bishop’s gift. In an instant, all his Lordship’s allegations against my activity and watchfulness flashed upon my mind—three weeks had elapsed since I had visited that neighbourhood, and then, ‘The rector was quite well.’ Still I did not know how to excuse myself to my patron for my palpable remissness, nor calculate the mischief the delay might have occasioned.

“In order to ascertain the precise date of the event upon which so much depended, I pulled

up at the corner of the deep-rutted lane which leads down to Glanberry village, and which looked, at the moment, like the top of a twelfth-cake, considerably mangled about the sugar, and hailed one of the clods of the village.

“‘I say,’ cried I, ‘how long is it since Mr. Simpkinson died?’

“‘Last Monday, Sir,’ said the man.

“‘He wasn’t ill long?’ asked I.

“‘Only three days, Sir,’ said the man. ‘That’s just it, Sir—we are here to-day, and gone to-morrow.’

“‘Thank you, my friend,’ said I, ‘resolving, at all events, for once, however much I admired and admitted the pithiness of his remark upon the uncertainty of life, to reverse the principle in my own case. I muttered it to myself, ‘I shall be gone to-day, and *here* to-morrow,’ and putting spurs to my nag, hurried home to my intended mother-in-law’s; and, without further delay, took a post-chaise to the first inn on the high road, and thence, per Comet, transported myself to London, where my Right Reverend Patron had

established himself, in order to attend his Parliamentary duties.

“I need not,” said Wells, “detain you with an account of the kind reception I met with. The Bishop took me cordially by the hand, expressed not only his great delight at the vacancy, and the opportunity it afforded him of securing my happiness with Sarah—but his approbation of my activity and vigilance in having got the start of any other applicant. He pressed my hand again at parting, and wrote an extremely warm note, of which I was the bearer, to Mrs. Grimsthorpe, introducing me formally as the rector of Glanberry.

“When I left his Lordship’s house,” continued my father-in-law elect, “I felt very differently from what I felt when I arrived. I was conscious of a responsibility which had never belonged to me before—I had the cure of souls—I felt the importance of my ministerial character, and resolved, now that I had really and positively assumed it, to act up to the expectations which I fancied my patron had formed.

“I hastened to my mother-in-law’s, and was rewarded with a smile and a shake of the hand by the old lady, and a squeeze of the hand, and something more agreeable, by the young one. The day of happiness had dawned, and the next morning I was to proceed to Glanberry, to communicate with the respected Mrs. Simpkinson, on the subject of taking possession, having previously bound Mrs. Grimsthorpe and Sarah to the most inviolable secrecy, inasmuch as, after what the Bishop had told me of occasional applications from ministers, I felt that the thing, however near my lip the cup might be, was not perfectly safe till I was actually inducted.

“To Sarah, the prospect of a residence in that part of the country was very agreeable. Glanberry parsonage was beautifully situated—in the valley, it is true, but sheltered by a tuft of tall and noble trees—a clear trout-stream circumundulated the grounds, black as ink beneath their shade, and bright as silver in the sunshine—the place, too, might be improved—and so on,

—but it was all we wished for, all we wanted; and however much my happiness was alloyed by the reflection that a human being had died to make way for me, I could not help remembering that he had held the living five-and-twenty years, and came into possession of it under a similar contingency.

“No sooner had we breakfasted,” continued Wells, “for with such credentials as the Bishop’s presentation I was held presentable at the *déjeûner* of the dowager, than I mounted my horse and rode off to Glanberry, resolving to take no servant with me, nor give any indication of the object of my visit. Instead of mounting the hill, I kept along the lower left-hand road, and when I approached the boundaries of *my* parish, I pulled-up into a walk, fearful lest the ‘very stones should prate at my whereabouts;’ and, having as quietly and unostentatiously as possible reached the second-rate inn, I delivered my nag to the ostler, and, telling him I should not be long gone, set forward upon what, how-

ever advantageous to me the results, I could not but feel to be a delicate and disagreeable conversation with the late incumbent's family.

“ I approached the rectory ; but, I must confess, strong as I was in the zeal of my new calling, I saw in my way thither many moving sights,—girls of tender years, evidently without control, and boys, still yet their juniors, using language, which, however venial I might have thought it when I occupied other stations, convinced me, that the strictest attention had not been paid to the morals of the population. ‘ This,’ said I to myself, ‘ I will soon set to rights ; and Sarah is so good, and so devoted to works of charity and beneficence, that she will be a fitting helpmeet in my labours.’ Many other things I saw, scarce worth enumerating now, which cried aloud for correction ; and drawing good from evil, I felt rather gratified than otherwise, that something was left for me to do, in order to raise myself in the estimation of the well-disposed portion of the inhabitants of Glanberry.

“ When I reached the rectory, I rang the bell—it sounded mournfully. How often had the late incumbent rang that bell, which, for nearly a quarter of a century, had announced to his watchful wife and affectionate children his return to his peaceful fireside. ‘How transient,’ thought I, ‘is everything of this world—How justly does Young say—

“ The most attenuated thread

“ Is cord, is cable to man’s, tended

“ Ill or earthly bliss—”

“ Here is the house in which he delighted—here are the grounds which he improved—the trees he planted—and these are now mine; and that study, through the windows of which the cheerful fire, beside which he sat, was wont to gleam at this time of the year, and before which his favourite spaniel lay and slumbered—that, too, devolves on me—all his care—all his partiality were vain—and yet—so will it be with *me*, who am now so anxiously about to take possession of it.

“ A servant, in the deepest mourning, opened the gate. I asked, in a tone, and with an expression of countenance unassumed and natural while such thoughts were in my mind, ‘ If his mistress were at home?’ The man answered, ‘ Yes;’ and as I followed him round the gravel sweep to the door of the house, I could scarcely refrain from a tear, while thinking that the hour was come when the quiet of an amiable family must be disturbed, and they cast upon the world, to seek another habitation and a home.

“ The man ushered me into the drawing-room, where I found the amiable daughters of the late incumbent—their mother was yet absent; this, somehow, I did not regret, and I even felt a hope that she might not present herself: inasmuch as what I had to communicate might be told to the young ladies with less painful effect than it would be likely to produce upon their surviving parent. Upon hearing my name announced, the eldest of the group arose, and motioned me to take a seat; ‘ I said that the object of my visit was to say a few words to-

Mrs. Simpkinson, whom I had understood to be at home, but——’

“ ‘Mamma is at home,’ said Miss Simpkinson, ‘and will be here in a few minutes—pray be seated.’

“ I sat down, and cast my eyes round the drawing-room, which looked extremely comfortable, and commanded an exceedingly pretty view of the grounds, which were very tastefully disposed in the valley; while the side of the hill whence I had viewed the funeral, well-studded with tall firs, afforded an evergreen background to the clumps and clusters of laurels, and other immutable plants which graced the lawn.

“ ‘I assure you,’ said I, ‘that it is with no small degree of pain I pay Glanberry this visit: I am quite aware that, from long habit, it must have become a favourite residence with you all, and nothing is more disagreeable than displacing a family, to whose taste a house is so much indebted for improvement and comfort.’

“ ‘It will, indeed,’ said Miss Simpkinson,

‘be a dreadful sacrifice when we are forced to give it up; my two sisters were born here, and I came hither when I was but two years old.’

“ ‘When,’ said I, tenderly, ‘when does your amiable mother think of leaving this——’

“ ‘We propose,’ said the young lady, ‘going to London in about ten days.’

“ ‘I trust,’ said I, ‘that your mother will not think of hurrying away on my account,—let her suit her own convenience, and take her own time. I need not explain further the nature of my visit—the more lightly such details are touched upon, the better for all our sakes; if I get in by Lady-day I shall be quite satisfied, because I see, by the state of this room, it must be new papered.’

“ ‘Yes, Sir,’ said Miss Simpkinson, ‘it is rather faded.’

“ ‘And I think,’ said I, seeing how philosophically the orphans bore the subject, ‘I shall knock down this end of the room, and throw out a bay-window where the recess is; by doing which, and cutting through the wall, and making

a pair of double folding-doors into the dining-room, we shall get a vista from one end of the house to the other.'

" ' Papa once thought of doing that,' said the second daughter.

" ' Poor dear man,' said I, ' those reflections are now of no use—I mean, besides these alterations, to add a conservatory to the suite, which I think will have a good effect; will you allow me just to measure a little?' Saying which, I rose from my chair, and paced across the room.

" ' Pray, Sir,' said Miss Simpkinson, after whispering with her sister, ' might I ask, did Papa ever communicate to you his intentions?'

" ' No,' said I, ' we never were personally acquainted; but of course none of these alterations will be begun till you have finally quitted the premises.'

" ' Finally!' said Miss Simpkinson, ' we are only going to London for six weeks.'

" ' Why,' said I, blending a little of the dictatorial with the pathetic and sympathetic,

‘after you once leave the house, I think I must be compelled to take possession; because it will be a great object to me to be here early in the spring.’

“ ‘Pray, Sir,’ said the young lady, ‘may I inquire what you propose doing here?’

“ ‘Living here altogether,’ said I, ‘I shall have no other house for the next year or two.’

“ ‘In what capacity?’ said Miss Simpkinson.

“ ‘As rector of Glanberry,’ said I. I feared I had not made myself sufficiently understood; but I was delicate in explaining. ‘The bishop has presented me to the living, and with all proper consideration for your feelings and convenience, as well as for those of your excellent parent, I think the period I have fixed is as distant as I can well name.’

“ ‘Dear me!’ said Miss Simpkinson, ‘how very strange!—would not you like to see Papa?’

“ ‘Oh dear no,’ said I, ‘not for the world.’

“ ‘Ah!’ said the young lady, ‘here he comes to explain for himself.’

“ ‘ I turned round, and beheld, to my infinite amazement, a most respectable rubicund divine and a lady, moving along a nice smooth gravel-walk, looking as plump as red-legged partridges, as loving as doves, and much better than I could possibly have expected.

“ Our meeting was of a very curious nature ; I was considerably embarrassed ; I did not personally know my fat friend, but his eldest daughter, opening the glass-door which led to the garden, admitted the happy couple, to whom she presented me, as her Pa and Ma.

“ ‘ Sir,’ said my clerical friend, unshovelling his head, ‘ I am extremely glad to see you.’

“ ‘ You are very kind, Sir,’ said I, ‘ I have only just called to take a look over the premises.’

“ ‘ Yes, Papa,’ said Miss Simpkinson, who seemed rather angry, and sufficiently versed in church matters to see that there must be some mistake, ‘ this gentleman says the Bishop has presented him to your living,’

“ ‘ Indeed !’ said Papa, ‘ as how, Sir, I——’

“ ‘Why, Sir, briefly thus,’ said I; ‘upon the death of our lamented friend, the late incumbent, I applied for the preferment, and obtained it.’

“ ‘Upon the death of the late incumbent, Sir!’ said my friend, ‘why you could scarcely have been born when the late incumbent died—it is more than four-and-twenty years since.’

“ ‘Dear me, Sir,’ said I, ‘then I must be either mad or dreaming; I made the application to the Bishop only the day before yesterday, and the day before *that*, I became acquainted with the demise of the late rector.’

“ At this announcement everybody stared, and the lady of the house, with a prudence worthy of the highest praise, stuck the poker into the fire.

“ ‘Demise, Sir!’ said Simpkinson, ‘why! do I look like a dead man? Here I am alive and well—I cannot say merry—for the dress in which you see my family will sufficiently announce that we have experienced a sad and heavy loss.’

“ ‘What, Sir!’ exclaimed I, so completely overcome as not to be able exactly to fashion my words properly, ‘wasn’t you buried last Tuesday?’

“ ‘Not I,’ replied the incumbent, for such he proved to be; ‘my poor brother George, who had been staying here for some time, died last week, and was interred in our church on the day you mention, but for *me*——’

“ ‘Well,’ exclaimed Miss Simpkinson, who seemed delighted with the result, ‘I thought there must be some mistake.’

“ ‘Upon my word,’ said I, ‘I can only throw myself upon your kindness and indulgence to forgive me; there certainly *is* a mistake, and the mistake is certainly mine; the similarity of the name, and the profession I believe’—here I received a nod of assent—‘have caused this *contre-temps*, and I have only to apologise for what must appear a most impertinent intrusion upon you at this moment. I hope, Sir,’ continued I, proffering my hand to the worthy rector, ‘you will pardon me, and that our very curious introduction to

each other may lead to a future acquaintance ; you may rest assured that I should be the last man in the world to rejoice in your death.'

" ' Ha !' said the third daughter, who before had said nothing, and seemed now determined to fire off an old joke, ' it is not Pa's death you would rejoice in, Sir, but his *living*.'

" I affected not to understand this quibble of the pert thing, who, I could see, was the pet of the family, and fancied herself a beauty ; and having bowed to all the party, tripped over the carpet, and stumbled down the steps, and left the house in search of my horse, whose stall in possession was worth infinitely more than *my* rectory *in prospectu*.

" That," said Wells, " was my first great failure ; however, time and patience conquered all obstacles, and I married Sarah upon an income not much exceeding what you state yours to be now—and as for *her* fortune, she did not come to it till the death of her excellent mother ; but we contrived to get on, and although we had

nothing superfluous, yet we lived as people in our state of life should."

I was very well pleased to hear this adventure of my respectable father-in-law, and it was told with all the advantages of point and manner, which very much reminded me of my friend Daly; but I did not quite relish the climax. By way of inference from the story, he told me of his skill in making the most of a little, and in the art of doing as well upon a small income, as another man could upon a large one; but these were not agreeable indications to a lover who had less than four hundred a-year, who stood pledged to marry a charming young lady with nothing at all, which seemed, from all I could collect, to be the real state of the case.

Wells, however, whose volubility when once "off" was uncheckable, and who appeared to me, upon this particular morning, resolved to talk me out of the main object of my interview, which was really to ascertain how I was safely and consistently to fulfil my engagement with

him and his daughter, would not let me pause here; nor could I get quit of him till he had explained to me how the Bishop rallied him upon his blunder, and how he got a living in Norfolk, where his sporting propensities were fully gratified, and whence his excursions to Newmarket produced that gentle remonstrance from another Prelate, of which he had just given me the description. “The acquisition of this preferment,” said he, “accelerated my happiness. Never shall I forget the strange embarrassments of our wedding-day, or rather evening! Sarah, as she still has, had then a great dislike to show or affectation, and we determined when the happy hour was fixed, to take it quietly, and resolved, as we were to start for Norfolk, to have no favours, no ringings, no noises, no *déjeûners*, nor anything of the kind; but to take our dinner domestically with my mother-in-law, and start in the evening with no servant but Sarah’s maid, and so sleep at Chelmsford—at the Black Boy, a remarkably good inn in those days—we did not send down

for rooms—afraid of being found out, and didn't like being laughed at.—Wedding over—Sarah and I, one—we fulfilled all our intentions, were kissed and blessed by the amiable Mrs. Grims-thorpe, and by seven o'clock packed in our postchaise—away we went—post-boy in the dark, both as to the night, and as to the matrimonial part of our expedition—changed at Romford, and reached the wished-for inn at a quarter after ten. Waiters,—chambermaids,—ostlers, and landlord in a moment were at the carriage-door. Down went the steps—up came mine host.

“ ‘Very sorry, Sir,’ said he, ‘we have no accommodation to-night; not a room disengaged, Sir. The third division of the 75th regiment of foot marched in this afternoon; and neither here nor at the Head (Saracen’s) is there a bed unoccupied. Great regret, Sir—wish you had written, Sir, and——’

“Poor Sarah was a good deal tired—what with the journey, and the excitement, and one thing and another. However, what could be

done? Nothing remained but going on to Witham. Blue Posts—capital house—decided in a moment—ordered horses—took four to accelerate our movements. First and second turn out, down the yard—up they come—poke them in—boys mount—crack go the whips, and away go we. I confess it *was* very provoking; but there was no help for it.”

“Well,” said I, “you reached Witham?”

“Just at midnight,” said Wells. “Lights in the windows, and groups at the door;—all up. There things looked better, and Sally was preparing for a spring from the carriage, when the waiter, with extended arms, meant rather to repel than welcome us, sang the second part of the Chelmsford tune, by informing us that we couldn’t have a bed in Witham, as the *second* division of the 75th regiment of foot had marched in that afternoon, and occupied every available apartment.

“This was enough to try the patience of Job. I swore, and Sarah cried; but all in vain. We had, as in the former case, no resource but pro-

ceeding to Colchester, where the more extensive means of accommodation gave us hopes that, even at the late hour at which we should reach it, we might find shelter; and, accordingly, two elderly post-boys were aroused from their slumbers, and mounted upon jaded horses, which, however, by dint of flogging, arrived in front of the Cups, at Colchester, at about half-past one, where, to our great delight, we found every thing remarkably lively and gay.

“ ‘Can we have rooms?’ said I, in a tone of anxiety not to be described.

“ ‘Yes, Sir; sitting-room and bed-room directly,’ said the waiter. ‘Beg to apologise, Sir, for the sitting-room—down stairs; but the *first* division of the 75th regiment of foot marched in here this afternoon, and the officers are giving a dinner to the Mayor and several members of the Corporation, Sir.’

“ ‘Oh,’ said I, ‘never mind the Mayor and Corporation: show us to our rooms; for we are tired to death.’

“ ‘This way, Sir,’ said the man, who was

speedily joined by a chambermaid; and together they ushered us into a parlour on the left-hand of the gateway, in which parlour stage-coach passengers were generally fed in the daytime.

“ ‘ Which do you like, Ma’am,’ said the maid to Sarah, ‘ the feather-bed a-top or the mattress ?’

“ The question, under the circumstances, excited a considerable degree of confusion on the part of my dear bride, who evaded a direct answer, by desiring to be shown to her apartment; while her maid, who had rushed incontinently to the kitchen fire to warm her feet, was summoned to attend her mistress.

“ I took advantage of their temporary absence to fortify nature with a glass of egged-wine, which I found agree so well with my constitution, that I ordered a second, at the same time telling the waiter to desire the chambermaid to send my wife’s maid down to me. This instruction was obeyed; and I desired Mrs. Harvey to ask her mistress whether she would allow me to send

her anything to cheer her up after her worrying journey, or whether she was coming down again. But I got very little consolation from the maid, who gave me to understand that her lady was in the greatest agitation, and that she really did not know what to do.

“ ‘What is the matter?’ said I.

“ ‘Matter, Sir!’ replied the maid; ‘matter enough, I think! Where do you think your sleeping-room is?’

“ ‘How should I know?’ said I.

“ ‘Why, Sir, if you’ll believe me,’ said the maid, ‘you have to go into the mess-room, as they call it—and a nice mess it is in—among all the soldier-officers, and mayors and corporationers, and turn to your right-hand, right afore ’em all. It’s the only room unoccupied—or, at least, as was unoccupied; and there’s my poor mistress, tucked up, and trembling like a haspen leaf, with nothing but a half-inch plank between her and the first division of his Majesty’s 75th regiment of foot!’

“ ‘The deuce she is!’ said I. ‘What a state

for a bride ! There's not a moment to be lost ; —I'm off. Poor Sarah exposed to the conversation, at least, of those oysterous, boisterous convivialists !

“ ‘ When *I* come down,’ said the maid, ‘ one of ’em was dancing on the table, and twelve or thirteen singing something to the tune of the “Sprig of Shilaleagh and Shamrock so Green ;” and I’m sure it’s near three o’clock in the morning.’ ”

“ ‘ Broiled bones for thirteen, and two more pecks of oysters,’ cried a waiter in the passage. ‘ Three bowls of punch, and eight brandy-grogs, cold without.’ ”

“ In a frenzy I seized the candlestick, and, marshalled by my Thais, ascended the staircase, and having, under her direction, pushed open a door, found myself, sure enough, in the midst of a galaxy of heroes, military and civil, who were good enough to receive me ‘ with all the honours,’ and a shout which continued till I had made good my landing in our apartment, the door of which I locked and bolted ; and having then, with great labour, dragged a chest of

drawers, which happened to be in the room, against the portal, fell to soothing my poor Sarah, who lay shivering and shaking at the stormy hilarity of our gallant neighbours.

“It may be easily imagined that we did not sleep much. More than once, before they retreated, attempts were made to force an entrance to our room. At some periods we were treated with shouts of laughter, following loud toasts and louder songs; nor was it until near five o’clock that the corps dispersed, the whole party singing “God save the King,” *fortissimo*. To these succeeded people putting out the lights and clearing the things away, who continued their avocation for another hour at least, so that our start in matrimonial life was anything but propitious; however, I tell you this as a warning; and when you carry off Harriet, take special care to inquire whether any of His Majesty’s troops are moving on the same line of march.”

It was impossible not to be amused by the manner in which the reverend gentleman re-

lated the story, which was infinitely more *piquante* in his version of it, than in my transcript; but still it ended with an allusion to a subject of which, as it appeared to me, he now never lost sight—I mean my marriage with his daughter, to which he incessantly referred, as I thought, in order to stamp indelibly upon my mind the absolute certainty of its occurrence, taking *my* silence as an admission and acquiescence, before he came to that particular discussion, the issue of which appeared to me likely to influence the result very seriously.

He had scarcely finished this tale of misadventures, before the ladies made their re-appearance, accompanied by my friends the Nubleys. This was a new embarrassment, and a fresh entanglement; I should no doubt be presented to my old acquaintances in my new character, and thus more witnesses to the earnestness of my proposal and the seriousness of its acceptance would be procured. However, the conversation which I so much desired, could not be very long delayed, and as I thought it was best

to put a good face upon the matter, I joined the new arrivals with an air of gaiety, which I must say Mrs. Nubley seemed fully to appreciate and duly to sympathize with. I admit, however, that I felt extremely awkward when I offered my arm to Harriet, and rather more so when she accepted it; but I was quite overcome when, with what appeared to me a malicious activity, the rest of the party contrived to separate, and leave us together, and alone, at the identical turn in the walk where, the night before, we had stopped to look at the moon!

CHAPTER V.

THE evening, and supper which succeeded to this “observation,” varied very considerably from any of which I had previously partaken at Wells’s. Instead of catching a look of Harriet’s soft eyes stealthily, or wishing to cajole myself and others into a belief of my perfect carelessness about her, we were what might be called fixed—settled: everybody got out of our way; nobody interfered with us; and when the dear young pinafore, who had always been hopping and jumping about us, came evidently prepared to ask Harriet some *naïve* question, her mother called her away with a sort of snub, just as she would have interdicted her peeping at a brace of birds in a cage,—dear creatures, who never breed if they are looked at. The thought struck me at the moment, and I

could hardly help fancying my dear fair-haired Harriet and myself a pair of canaries, in order to encourage whom in their matrimonial propensities, the careful fancier hangs up a ready-made bag of hair, and moss, and other materials, essential to the progress of nidification.

The only thing which enlivened me in the midst of my happiness was a particularly favourable display of my dear friend Nubley's extraordinary faculty of thinking aloud, which he made infinitely to *my* delight, and to the superlative horror of Mrs. Empson, his partner at whist, during one of the interesting periods of that sublime game.

"Play, Ma'am," *said* he to his partner,—and then he *thought*, "Umph, I suppose she'll play her king—she *must* have the king. I can see into Sims's hand—he hasn't got it. Mrs. Illingworth can't have it, she refused before—umph!"

The poor lady was confused in the highest degree. Of all that her partner had thought, and which of course their opponents heard, she did not feel it right to take advantage, being cer-

tain, at the same time, that if she did not, she should be overwhelmed by a broadside of censure for her blundering; for Nubley was a strict player, and never meant to express one of his thoughts or surmises. She chose for herself, and played the king—a proceeding which immediately produced a telegraphic signal between Mr. Sims and Mrs. Illingworth, which as the *coup* made them game and game, in the rubber made no great difference.

Wells was more than usually agreeable, and when that most sociable of meals—supper—came, we sat down snug and cozy, and it was all very enjoyable. But Harriet!—what could I do?—she was mine. I could not maintain an establishment without means, and yet I possessed her; and in the middle of the gaiety I thought—and every body knows how rapidly the chain of thought rattles through the brain—that, if my brother Cuthbert were really so rich, and so much attached to me, I need not go to plod and follow in his steps, and come home, perhaps worn out and broken down, like Nubley, in

order to secure a competency. He himself had achieved that great object; he had sacrificed, as I considered, his time, and certainly, by his own account, injured his health, in money-hunting, and having accumulated a fine fortune, of course he would leave it to me at his death—a conclusion to which I was naturally drawn by his having most liberally proposed to augment my income during his life-time. This, as I warmed with some of my excellent and reverend father-in-law's mixture, rather raised my spirits, and Harriet brightened up too, perhaps because she saw my cheerfulness increase; and so when the party dispersed, and I walked home with the Nubleys, I felt that I had not done so foolish a thing—or perhaps I might say, had not been led into so foolish a thing—as I at first fancied my proposed alliance with the Wellses to be.

The manner in which Nubley had wrapped himself up for his summer evening's walk, totally precluded the possibility of any lengthened conversation. I took charge of Mrs.

Nubley, whose long residence in hotter climates, I suppose, had rendered a small exhibition of a little warm negus, or something of the sort, congenial, for she—who held my arm—never ceased talking till we arrived at the gates of Chittagong Lodge, and when we had achieved this, Nubley put his frog-like mouth out of his steaming worsted net comforter, in which his chin and even nose were enveloped, and said, “That Sims is a beast—five rubbers we played together,—he revoked twice, told of it once, and trumped a thirteenth.”

Nothing more passed that evening as to my prospects, except a few cheering laughs from Mrs. Nubley, at the recollection of Harriet’s tender looks cast towards me during the evening. “Lauk, Gilbert, you are such a man—oh dear! he, he, he!” all of which sounded most discordant to my ears, because, with all good intentions, it proved to me that I had not so abstractedly fixed my devoted glances upon the tender young creature as I ought to have done. The morning, however, brought with it scenes

and events, for which, although I might naturally have been prepared, I scarcely expected so soon—scenes which I am able now but imperfectly to describe, and events which at one blow tottered my air-built castles to their foundations, and darkened the prospects which hope had rendered brilliant.

When once an idea gets possession of the mind, sown there like an acorn, how rapidly it begins to germinate—how it grows up, and spreads its branches, until it affords a refreshing shade under which to repose ! The new view I had recently taken of my brother's position in the world, with the consciousness, and indeed his own declaration to the effect that he would at all events take care of me, had so turned the current of my thoughts and anticipations, that I fell asleep from mere weariness of calculating the results of the declaration I resolved to make to him of my preference for England, and the tranquil pleasures of domestic life, upon a small scale, to the more magnificent allurements of an Eastern residence, where, after all, the luxu-

ries by which a man is surrounded, are only so many attempts at counteracting evils which here, where we have not the luxuries, do not exist. Thus, making a sort of debtor and creditor account of the ills and advantages of a Calcutta life, it appeared to me that I should find true happiness no where but at home. This feeling even pervaded my dreams, and I went down to breakfast resolved to remain where I was, and trust to Cuthbert's fraternal affection and generosity for the rest.

When I entered the breakfast parlour, I found Nubley moaning and murmuring, with a letter in his hand, which he had just been reading. He looked at me with one of his contemplative stares, and even before the usual matitunal salutation, muttered out, "Poor devil—bad business—umph!—not my fault that he stopped so long—going to be married too!"—and then recovering from his eloquent trance, he held out his hand, and said, "Good morning, Gilbert." I echoed the words—somewhat excited by the oracular exclamations of my unconscious host.

“Letters from Calcutta,” said Nubléy.

“Any news from Cuthbert?” said I.

“Yes,” replied Nubley—“bad indigo-crop—eh!—good for holders—market overstocked with English goods—glass and tin in demand.”

“But Cuthbert is well?” I inquired.

“Government paper high”—continued he—
“your brother—yes—not well by any means: he is married—at least so he writes word, I think.”

“Married!” exclaimed I—“Cuthbert married!” and the words, as I repeated them, seemed to wither all my hopes: in an instant all the expectations I had formed of my brother’s protection and assistance, even if I remained in England, were overthrown: he had formed a new connexion—new ties would bind him, new interests affect him: he would become the father of new Gurneys, who would of course supersede in his cares and affections the collateral branch.

“Yes,” said Nubley, “married a widow—a very nice woman—was a barrister at Calcutta,

and died about ten years ago—that is, I mean, her husband—poor fellow! He was a great smoker—chilum after chilum—a very great smoker!”—and then, relapsing, he continued—“Yes,—cuts him out to be sure—must go—hates it I know—what an ass he must have been, to be sure, to go and fall in love with that girl. Umph! Well, Mr. Gilbert,” added he, speakingly, “I suppose now you will make up your mind to take your departure forthwith—your only chance—nothing to be done here—can’t keep a wife upon four hundred a year—bonnets, shawls, trinkets, gewgaws.”

“I want none of them,” said I.

“No,” said Nubley; “but Mrs. Gilbert Gurney will: look at *my* wife—never easy but when she is buying something she does not want.”

“Lauk, Mr. N.!” screamed the lady, who most provokingly entered the room in time to hear her husband’s observations, “you are such a man—he, he, he!”

“Ugh!” said Nubley, as soon as he heard her voice, “you are there to speak for yourself

—pretty business—no matter—nothing to us, to be sure—*we* cannot help it—here, Gilbert, read that side of Cuthbert's letter."

Saying which, he handed me that which, if not my death-warrant, at least contained my sentence of transportation, and doubling down one side of the letter, which contained some private remarks upon the relative qualities of the different articles in which I was destined hereafter to deal, pointed to the passage which was appointed for my perusal. I accordingly read as follows—

"In marrying I have sought to obtain an amiable and rational companion—of the merits of Mrs. Falwasser you are competent to judge. Increasing in years, as I now am, I felt a want of some being near me and about me who would take and express an interest in my proceedings, and to whom I might confide the thoughts and feelings which, constituted as we are, become a painful burthen when confined to our own hearts and minds. I had hoped that Gilbert would long before this have accepted my often

repeated invitations to my home and my affections; but I fear my applications continue disregarded; and I have nothing to reproach myself with upon his account in forming this alliance. Mrs. Falwasser's three children are, as you know, in England for their education; and if you have an opportunity of communicating with them through the lady under whose charge the two eldest (girls) are placed, and to whom Mrs. Gurney troubles you with a letter, I should feel obliged by your making her acquainted, for their sakes, with the character of their father-in-law, and in assuring them, as well as their brother George, that in me they will find a second parent, anxious, for their mother's sake, to do every thing in my power to render them happy, respectable, and comfortable."

I could at the moment read no further. Here was the strongest evidence of the kindly generous feelings of my neglected brother diverted by my carelessness of his exhortations and suggestions into other channels, even in a more decided manner than I had anticipated.

“Umph!” said Nubley, “you find out now what you have lost—that’s the way of young people—commit follies—get sorry—get better—commit more—like what the proverb says, ‘Marry in haste, repent at leisure.’”

“Lauk! Mr. N.,” exclaimed the tea-making lady, who saw that I was seriously affected by the *bouleversement* of my fortunes, and the reproachful observations of my brother, “how you do talk—why Mr. Cuthbert seems to have married in haste—perhaps he may repent at leisure—he, he, he!”

“Stuff,” said Nubley, “why should *he* repent? Mrs. Falwasser is a clever, steady, respectable woman.”

“I’m sure,” said Mrs. Nubley, “I have nothing to say against her respectability or her cleverness; but she used to dress like a girl of fifteen, and talk the greatest nonsense I ever heard in my life; they say she talked Mr. Falwasser to death—and as to vanity! lau, there never was such a woman—he, he, he, he!”

“Falwasser was a brute!” said Nubley—“a queer, odd little man—coarse in manner—abrupt in conversation, and so absent that you could not keep him to one point five minutes—besides, he was such a dirty-looking dog.”

Overcome as I was by my feelings of disappointment and sorrow, I could not but open my eyes and ears to these two speeches, which as specimens of self-ignorance, if such a word may be coined, seemed to me by far to exceed any thing I had ever previously heard; each of these people drew the other's portrait, while caricaturing the imperfections of their absent friends—and this they did with the most perfect *sang froid*, and an utter unconsciousness of their own faults and foibles.

“Don't read any more, Gilbert,” said Mrs. Nubley, “till after breakfast.”

“Let him alone, Caroline,” said Nubley; “let him get it over: he will be better able to decide what's to be done.”

“Lauk, Mr. N., you are such a man!” replied the lady. “He, he, he!”

I resumed my reading.

“ You must not let Gilbert suppose, nor suppose yourself, that this alteration in my state has made, or will make, any difference in my feelings towards him. That it will necessarily make an alteration in my power of serving him is true. I must not only consider the claims of those with whom I have linked my fortunes; but I must look forward to the claims of others who may yet be born; but although I apprehend any farther solicitation will be vain as regards my brother’s voyage hither, I beg you to assure him that nothing would more add to my happiness than availing himself of the still open opportunity of reaping an honourable and respectable competency for his after-life. I admit I have been prejudiced against him by the letters of our late mother’s friend; but those prejudices are formed neither against his heart nor his principles—they point rather at his pursuits, his companions, and a flighty unsteadiness, which I know are all operating against his embarkation in a lucrative and highly respectable

concern, which, with you before his eyes, cannot fail to hold out a prospect even brighter than that which greeted me on my arrival in this country. I give him up, I confess. I have written to him by this opportunity, once more urging him to action, and assuring him of the kindest reception and welcome from myself and from his affectionate sister-in-law, who has from herself added a postscript to my letter."

"There," said Nubley, "that's all there is about you."

"There is enough," said I, almost sobbing with grief, to find how deeply the calunnies and misrepresentations of Miss Crab had sunk into my brother's mind; and to think how childishly I had conducted myself, so as to justify them in a very eminent degree.

"Well," said Nubley, "what d'ye say? will you go? you have nothing to look for from him here—you have engaged yourself to be married to a girl without a pice: what's your determination?" And then added the worthy gentleman, in one of his "mental ejaculations," "the fool won't go even now."

“ I *will* go,” said I, striking my hand upon the table—“ I will disprove the calumnies of my bitterest enemy ; I will reinstate myself in Cuthbert’s good opinion ; and I would rather go to him now than before, because he has less left in his power to tempt me with—”

“ That’s right,” said mine host ; “ what will you do about Miss ? will she wait for you till you come home with your fortune ?”

I cast my eyes over Mr. Nubley’s person, and thought—but not aloud.

“ No, Sir,” said I ; “ why should we not be married before I go ?”

“ What !” said Nubley, “ and leave her behind—a sort of widow bewitched ?”

“ Behind !” exclaimed I, “ no : make her the partner of my voyage.”

“ Umph !” thought Nubley, “ sleeping partner, eh ?”

“ Lauk, Mr. Nubley,” screamed the lady, “ what a man you are—he, he, he !”

“ Will she go ?” said Nubley.

“ I should think, undoubtedly, yes,” said I : and then there flitted across my mind the pos-

sibility of her refusing to make the sacrifice; and then came a resolution to try her affection by that test; and then a notion that perhaps she would hesitate; and then a determination how I should act. To go I had positively decided. Acted upon by a combination of feelings, I saw but one course to pursue; the conviction of what I had already lost, increased my anxiety to save what yet remained. I too had added, by my matrimonial engagement, to the obligations which pointed to the undertaking; and I looked with anxiety, like my brother, not only to the immediate claimant upon my care and protection who really lived, and seemed to live for me, but to those of others yet unborn. I felt, too, that I had no other mode of redeeming my character for steadiness and sobriety; and as, I believe, above all other ties or inducements upon earth, to put the scheme into execution, was a desire of vindicating myself from the attacks and insinuations of Miss Crab. I should triumph over *her*; I should trample down the obstacles she had maliciously thrown in my way, and prove myself

worthy of the affection and countenance of a brother, of whom every body who knew him spoke with esteem and respect, and whose letters breathed the spirit of kindness and benevolence, which his actions so beautifully embodied.

While this discussion was going on, Nubleby seemed a good deal agitated—he fidgetted—and by the expression of his most inexpressive countenance, I anticipated some most generous proceeding on his part. I was sitting at the end of the breakfast table, buried in thought; he stood before me in the same state of mind. As usual, he looked me full in the face; and, as usual, began stubbling his chin. “Umph—partly my fault—should have stopped his going to Wells’s—wish I could do something for him myself—can’t with nine nephews and nieces, besides the whole tribe of Caddles—he ought to go.”

“I repeat, Sir,” said I, forgetting my usual caution with regard to his cogitations, “I will go; and I will not lose a moment in proceeding to the rectory, and stating my determination to the family.”

“Lauk!” cried Mrs. Nubley, “you’ll frighten them to death; the very mention of a sea-voyage will put the whole family into fits,—he, he, he, he!”

“Never mind the family or their fits,” said Nubley; “you are in the right humour, Gilbert, go while it lasts, and—don’t be bamboozled—go.”

I was in such a state of agitation during the walk to the parsonage, that everybody passing me must have thought me mad. I foresaw the sensation my announcement would create—I scarcely anticipated the actual consequences. But delay was worse than useless: if I lingered on a few more hours, or a few more days, it would only be protracting the state of security in which we appeared to fancy ourselves the night before, in order to render its overthrow the more painful; besides, with Mr. Nubley for a confidant, it would be vain to attempt any concealment of the eventual termination of the business. It should be done directly; and the first paroxysm

of my feelings had not abated when I found myself in Mr. Wells's library.

“Why, Gilbert,” said the divine, “you are earlier than usual to-day; eh! what's the matter? you are flurried—hurried—not worried, I hope?”

“Never so much in my life, Sir,” said I; “my brother Cuthbert is married—married to a widow with a family of children; and my only chance for an existence, is in an immediate voyage to Calcutta.”

“What, now?” said Mr. Wells—“to India now? surely the intelligence of your brother's marriage cannot have obliterated from your memory your own engagement of a similar nature, with my daughter?”

“Obliterate, my dear Sir,” said I; “no: on the contrary, the imperious necessity for my immediate departure, more deeply than anything that could have occurred, impresses that engagement on my mind. Harriet will, I am sure, not hesitate for a moment to accompany me to

a home of love and happiness, where, in addition to my brother's welcome, she will now receive one from my new sister-in-law. My brother's letters, although they express a doubt, which I must remove, of my perseverance in my projected voyage, breathe nothing but kindness, and anxiety to see and greet me."

"That I have no doubt is the case, Gilbert," said Mr. Wells; "but recollect, this greeting and welcome are offered by your brother to you, individually and personally; he is as little aware of the change which will probably take place in your condition, as you were yesterday of that which has occurred in his; and I think it will require great consideration—I am sure my wife will think so—before we consent to the transportation of our darling child to a distant country, and new connexions, without, as our prejudices would tell us, the slightest chance of ever seeing her again."

"There is no such chance, my dear Sir," said I; "we shall not remain long there; a few years will be sufficient, I trust, to fulfil our most

anxious desires; and we shall return to you, happy, and I trust wealthy."

"Wealth, Gilbert," said Mr. Wells, "does not constitute happiness—I admit it forms a principal ingredient; but you know my maxim—that which I have so often expressed—that which I acted upon, when you honestly and honourably confessed your attachment to my daughter; and, as far as I am concerned, I would rather see you and her snugly settled in this neighbourhood, upon your own small income, than lose the pleasure and charm of her society—and, I may say, yours—for the sake of reaping a harvest which, like that of our friend Nubley, is housed too late in the season to be enjoyed by the farmer—Besides, the voyage!"

"A mere pleasant excursion," said I; "a sail in a wherry from Westminster to Wandsworth, is infinitely more dangerous."

"For its duration, I grant you," said Wells; "but you will, I am sure, forgive me for recalling to your recollection the many descriptions you have given us of your own horror of

the undertaking, the bare apprehension of which, has kept you hitherto from performing what you all along felt to be an act of duty and affection to your brother, but which, now that you all at once have discovered the absolute necessity of performing it, are ‘trifles, light as air;’ and that the perils and dangers, and inconveniences and miseries, which you, as a single man, could not venture to encounter, will prove to be nothing more than a pleasurable excursion to a girl who has never left her paternal roof, and who is as inexperienced in the world, and as ill able to endure its asperities as an infant.”

“I see, Sir,” said I, “that you are opposed to my proposition: what can I do? how am I to act?”

“I do not understand, Gilbert,” said Mr. Wells, “why you are so suddenly and violently affected upon this point; your brother has repeatedly written in a similar strain, and—”

“Yes,” said I; “but his last letter shows me, that I have already lost some part of his affection and regard; and that I shall eventually be shut

out from his heart, if I remain apparently inattentive to his wishes, and regardless of his advice. Besides, the new tie, the new anxiety which I have incurred, forces me to rally, in order to render myself worthy of the love of her to whom my faith is plighted. Will you permit me to speak to Harriet upon the subject, plead my cause with her, and hear her decree."

"Most certainly," said Wells; "reserving always for myself and her mother, the right of controlling her decision according to circumstances: what her decision may be, I do not pretend to say, although I might probably guess; but this I know, that her dread of the treacherous element, to which you require her to confide herself for weeks and months, is such, that although it is said, 'Love's power is invincible and irresistible,' I apprehend even she will falter, before she agrees to be the partner of your expedition."

"I am content to rest my fate upon that," said I; "let me, therefore, speak to her, while you consult Mrs. Wells: rely upon it, a life of

happiness opens to us. All the objections I had to quitting England, will be overcome by having Harriet the companion of my voyage; and the study of my life will be to make her happy."

"All this, as you say, Gilbert," replied my Harriet's father, "looks bright and cheering; but you forget what we shall feel who lose our child. I am certain her mother will not hear of it; however, I promise you, if not your advocate with her, not to plead against you: she shall give her judgment fairly upon the merits of the case, in her own mind."

"I am satisfied," said I.

"You will find Harriet in the breakfast-room," said Wells; "but, before you see her, let me hope that you will not exert a greater degree of influence over her than you consider actually necessary to put her fairly in possession of your proposition; do not blind her to the concomitant ills by which the expected advantages will be surrounded; and, above all,

recollect, that as yet her filial duty is paramount to any other."

"I will recollect all this," said I; "you may trust me."

"I am sure I may, Gilbert," said Mr. Wells, taking my hand. "This affair has come upon me suddenly, and has unsettled me, and worries me. If I had fancied the voyage to be a *sine qua non*, I never certainly would have consented to the match; that is now too late to be revoked, and, therefore, as an optimist, I trust we shall make the best of it."

Saying which, Wells proceeded to find his wife, and I walked to the breakfast parlour, where he had told me I should find Harriet.

What course the reverend gentleman really intended to take with his better half, touching the subject-matter under consideration, I did not exactly comprehend. I had seen enough of Mr. Wells, to be quite aware that he was a perfect man of the world; and the consenting scene to which he had referred during our

conversation, was never absent from my mind. Nor could I fail of remarking, that, even upon the present occasion, in spite of all opposing difficulties, he pronounced his opinion, that whatever might occur, or however the discussion might end, the engagement was too far gone to be revoked; so that I judged their verdict would be, either that I should fulfil the contract, and marry Harriet before my departure, leaving her, as Nubley described it, a sort of "widow bewitched;" or, that we were to plight our faith and troth, and so wait for the marriage until my return. Both these courses appeared to me full of difficulty and annoyance. If I were merely going on a voyage, with the engagement on my hands, to return again in one, two, or even three years, the case would be different; but I was going for an indefinite period, and in a pursuit which, to be profitable, must be lasting. To be sure, I had heard Daly talk of "shamming sick," and had the precedent of my friend the army surgeon, in the stage coach, for getting a certificate for the liver

complaint, or rheumatism, which, as nobody can *see* a pain in the side or back, may be assumed at pleasure. But in these stratagems I had no faith; so I determined to tell my story plainly, simply, and candidly, to my gentle sweetheart, Harriet.

I found her as directed; and, after a few of those soft nothings, of which the early part of an English conversation is generally composed, drew her towards *the* subject, and eventually told her, almost verbatim, what I had told her father, adding that he was then actually engaged with her mother in discussing the affair.

“But why discuss it at all?” said Harriet, fixing her soft blue eyes on mine: “if you would stay in England, we should be as happy as the day were long, with your present income. What do *we* want, that a small income will not furnish? I have been used to the life you see us leading here—I seek no other; and here we are always sure of shelter and welcome.”

“Yes, dearest,” said I; “but life is transient and short, and the day will come when all this

scene must be changed, and some successor—as your father so well describes, in his story of the Glanberry rector—will come, and assume the mastery.

“True: but,” said Harriet, her eyes filling with tears at the bare allusion to the death of her beloved father, “that is surely not to happen yet; besides, we can have a happy home even without this—our own favourite cottage with the woodbines.”

“Cottages sound well in poetry,” said I, “and woodbines are bright and fragrant in summer: but when winter comes, they are nipped, and die; and when age creeps on, cottages and casements become unfitting adjuncts to a happy life. Besides, Harriet, duty, brotherly love, and a desire to restore myself to the good opinion of one whose affection I have nearly lost, urge me to the voyage.”

“Oh, Gilbert,” said Harriet, “think of the perils of the sea, the duration of your misery: pent within the ribs of a frail ship, exposed

to storms, and to all the casualties of the deep !”

“ They are trifles,” said I.

“ No, no, Gilbert, they are not trifles,” said Harriet ; “ and my poor heart would beat and bleed for fear and wretchedness, were you to encounter death and danger in their most awful forms for my sake. But if it be for your honour, for your fame, for your advantage—nay, dear Gilbert, if it be for your pleasure, that I should share all these with you, I am ready to embark to-morrow.”

The noble generosity of the gentle girl, rising gradually from timidity to heroism, with the warmth and kindness of her feelings, completely overcame me. I caught her to my heart, and kissed the sweet lips over which such proofs of affection and devotion had flowed. It was at that moment she won my heart for ever—conduct which I confess I had, upon trivial occasions, thought trifling ; coldness which I had at some times noticed as indicative of want

of sensibility; and levity which I had misconstrued into an indifference towards me and my affairs, were all obliterated by this burst of womanly devotion.

I had carried my point. She had voluntarily agreed to share my fate; and Wells and his wife entering the room at the moment, it may easily be imagined I lost no time in communicating my triumphant success.

“I wish, Gilbert,” said Wells, “that I could reciprocate your exultation, or even permit you to enjoy the satisfaction which I see expressed in your countenance. I told you we must reserve a veto upon Harriet’s decision, and I am obliged to exert the power. Her mother will not hear of it.”

“Madam,” said I, looking anxiously at Mrs. Wells.

“It is so, Mr. Gurney,” said the lady, in a tone “more of sorrow than of anger.” “I have lost two sisters in India. It is a subject upon which I never touch; but it was the severest blow I ever encountered, and under circumstances

which it is not worth while now to explain. You may be sure that these events have some influence upon my mind upon this occasion. But in addition to these, I have, really under the apprehension that some such proposition might be made, consulted our medical man on the point, and he is decidedly of opinion, that Harriet's life, like those of her dear aunts, would be sacrificed by a residence in a hot climate."

"But, my dear mother," said Harriet, "if Gilbert goes, *he* risks his life. We are pledged to each other; why should I not share the dangers which he feels it right, and just, and honourable to encounter? Suppose, mamma," continued the animated girl, "suppose we had been married a month since,"—and the supposition was followed by a crimson blush upon her cheeks,—“and he had received the letters to-day which have actually reached him, and determined his course, should I have abstained from accompanying him then, if he had wished me to be with him?”

"No, my love," said Mr. Wells, "nor should

you; nor would you, in the present case, had not a medical opinion been so decidedly expressed upon the subject. But I am sure Gilbert is not a man likely to take advantage of the influence he has over you, to induce you to hazard your life for the gratification of any personal feeling of his own."

The manner in which this was put silenced me. I really knew not how to act. Most true it was that I felt the positive necessity for going. If I went, it was of vital importance I should go forthwith. It now appeared that delay would be unavailing, because the constitutional predisposition, whatever it might be, which was to prohibit Harriet's visiting India now, would be equally an objection a month or two hence.

Oh how true it is, that we never know the value of a thing till it is lost, or in jeopardy. With health, and wealth, and everything covetable and desirable, it is the same. Twelve hours before, I had no conception how deeply I was interested in Harriet Wells. I could almost jokingly have talked of giving her up; and here, now that it

seemed I was likely to lose her, I thought my very heart would have broken.

I never shall forget the expression of Harriet's countenance when her mother gravely and solemnly pronounced the refusal of her consent to the voyage. She neither burst into tears, nor screamed, nor raved, nor fainted: she sat on her chair, like a statue, as pale as marble, her lips firmly closed, and her hands strongly clenched. There was in her countenance an expression of positive, fixed determination, in which, accustomed only to see her sweet, playful smile, and unclouded brow, there seemed something awful. This conflict with herself, this concentration of her energies, proved too much for her; and suddenly rising from her seat, she rushed out of the room, in a state to me the most alarming and painful. Her mother followed her, and Wells and I were again alone.

“This is a sad business,” said Wells. “But even were I to add the weight of my influence to your entreaties and Harriet's wishes, what would it be in the scale against her mother's

objections—objections strong and reasonable in themselves, and supported by a special opinion upon the particular case. Think, Gilbert, what would our feelings be—what your own—were we to hear that our dear good child had become the victim of a calamity, against which, being fore-warned, we ought to have been fore-armed.”

To this appeal, delivered in the kindest and most affectionate manner, what reply could I make, what further remonstrance could I offer? He saw that he had touched the right chord; and it was clear to me, that whatever activity he might have displayed in securing a husband for his daughter in the first instance, he was equally determined with his lady not to risk her safety by the fulfilment of our engagement, coupled with the proposed condition of emigration.

Mr. Welis added to what he had already said, a request that I would for the present return to Mr. Nubley's, where I should hear from him in the course of the afternoon, expressing his opinion that Harriet ought to be kept quiet and

undisturbed by any further agitation of the subject at present. I assented to his proposition, and quitted the rectory with a heavy heart; and on my way back to Nubley's began strangely to waver in my resolution about the voyage. However, upon my arrival, I found that the indolent Mr. Nubley had contrived, upon this special occasion, not only to write, but despatch by a cross post, a letter, announcing to a friend of his my desire to secure a passage in his fine ship, the *Ramchoondra*, of nine hundred and seventy tons; that he was most anxious for my good accommodation; describing moreover the situation which I was going to fill; and winding up his lengthened eulogium by announcing my name, and connexion with the eminent house of which he himself had been the head. With such an *avant courier*, who could doubt that I was destined to enjoy every convenience and luxury which the *Ramchoondra* could afford.

At any other time this extraordinary instance of kindness and activity on the part of Mr. Nubley would have received, as it certainly

merited, my warmest gratitude. But upon the present occasion, so far from feeling pleased or obliged to the worthy man, I could have killed him for his vivacity.

I related to him all that had passed at the parsonage, which he received with sundry noises and moanings. "I thought so," said he—"good job too—eh—pretty girl, I admit—sad incumbrance—no use taking them to India—all get sick, and white, and old—quite forget her in a month."

"Do you mean, Sir," said I, "that I should violate my engagement?"

"Eh," said Nubley—"no—not violate—what—oh dear no—don't do anything ungenteel—only—what I say is—wait—she is very young—you are not very old—marry when you come back—that was my advice before, so it is now."

"It appears to me extremely probable," said I, "that I shall be compelled to follow it."

"When d'ye go to town,"—said Nubley—"to-morrow—eh?"—and then he thought—"If

I don't get him off at once he won't stir."—"The ship will sail in less than a week—not much time for buying slops—and things."

"I know all about that," said I. "I have already been to those shops—that will not take me much time—but it is quite impossible I should leave this place in the present position of affairs."

"Oh," drawled Nubley—"what, it is neither on nor off—what we at Calcutta used to call neither my eye nor my elbow—shilly, shally—eh?"

"No, Sir," said I, indignantly; "I have nothing to complain of in the conduct of any of the parties concerned—on the contrary, they have all behaved with honour and kindness—I cannot expect them to sacrifice a darling child at my will and pleasure."

"Sacrifice a tom-tit," said Nubley—"they are just playing fast and loose to try you—take my advice, go to town per mail to-night—you can come back here on your way to Portsmouth—you'll see the difference—I remember

a play in my boyish days—I forget what it was called—and who wrote it—but there was a young woman and a wheatsheaf, and an old woman and a spinning wheel, and a squire covered with leaves like the children in the wood, and one of the people sang a song which said—

‘ Mind your sickle, let her be,
By and by she’ll follow thee.’ ”

“ Follow, Sir,” said I, “ she, Miss Wells, would not wait to follow, she would gladly be the partner of my voyage and my fate.”

“ Would she ?” said Nubley—“ then she will—you’ll have a favourable answer.”

“ No, no, it may not be,” said I, “ and how to act I cannot tell.”

“ Why, if you have a spark of feeling,” said Nubley, “ or a grain of sense, you’ll go to your brother — I have laid a train for the whole affair — you’ll be treated like a nabob in the Ramchoondra, and ten to one, if these people throw you over, you’ll fall in with some deuced pretty girls aboard, who will drive this little

woman clean out of your head;”—and then he thought—“and a devilish good job too.”

“Well, Sir,” said I, “I will not discuss the matter at present. I am to hear in the course of the afternoon from Mr. Wells, and by the contents of his letter I will regulate the time of my departure.”

“Now there you talk sense,” said Nubley—“your departure is certain—all that remains doubtful is the time at which you are to go”—“and a very pretty affair too—what a silly fellow to put it off till his brother married that Mrs. Falwasser—she’ll worry him to death, poor devil—umph, no business of mine.”

This last was as usual intended for a soliloquy—and at its conclusion Nubley went out muttering something about tiffin—and tallow—Madeira wine, and mull-mulls—leaving me to reflections of no very agreeable character or complexion.

It was about four o’clock when I received the following letter from Mr. Wells, according to his promise—

Rectory, half-past 3.

MY DEAR GILBERT,

Our poor child is extremely ill, and in a state not to be disturbed by the agitation of any such question as that which unhappily occupies our attention at this moment. I feel perfectly satisfied that your course is to proceed to your brother—I have long since told you I held that opinion, and whatever may be the sacrifices which I and my family may be called upon to make, rely upon it we shall be the last to advise or suggest a relinquishment of your expedition.

As to poor Harriet's going to India—a circumstance which, in our happier days, we have referred to rather as a joke than a certainty—I once for all announce to you its entire impossibility.—What with her mother's feelings, my own objections, and the positive opinion of the physician, we should, even supposing his prognostications to prove ill-founded, be placing her in a situation of unnecessary risk and peril,

and ourselves in a life of perpetual misery, anxiety, and uneasiness.

Think this over, and I am sure you will see the necessity of leaving her to our care and to the effects of that care and time to soothe or heal a sorrow and disappointment, which will, I apprehend, be of serious importance to her health as well as happiness. If there were a chance of your return in any reasonable time, it would be my pride and happiness to continue to consider you as her accepted lover, and my future son-in-law ; but engagements of that nature I think are best left to the parties most interested. All I can say is, that no objection will be opposed to your maintaining your claim upon her hand ; nor is there the remotest probability of the impression you have made being obliterated or superseded during your absence :—a more simple, kind, and affectionate heart does not beat in human breast, than that of my poor dear child, whose situation claims all our interest, and demands all our tenderness. I only repeat, because it is best to be at once decisive upon the

point, that to India no power on earth will induce us to let her go. I leave it to your honour and good feeling to take this statement as final.

Mrs. Nubley has been here, and tells Mrs. Wells that Mr. Nubley has already written with regard to your accommodation on board an East Indiaman; and that the question now only is, at what hour you take your departure from this place for London. She also says you return here on your way to Portsmouth. Under these circumstances, I would suggest your leaving it as early as convenient. It is impossible that you should see my poor child, even if you protracted your stay here for a day or two. She is terribly shaken. I would, therefore suggest, that you should write to me from London, giving me an insight into your plans; and if you should be content with all I can, as a parent, offer, we shall see you again when you return—Harriet's mind will by that time, I trust, be fortified so as to bear the interview and separation, and be satisfied with a life of hope till brighter days shall come.

I feel most sensitively the difficulty and delicacy

of our position ; but the esteem and regard I entertain for you—the anxiety I feel that you should do well, and prosper in all the essentials of the world, induce me to speak openly, fairly, and candidly, upon a subject with which I am assured your happiness is nearly connected, and in which mine is wholly locked up.

Do not answer this ; but write to me from London, and direct your letter to be left at the post-office. In the state to which Harriet is reduced, the abrupt arrival of a letter from you might produce *serious* effects. Believe me—let our connection terminate as it may—your's, my dear Gilbert, faithfully and sincerely,

R. WELLS.

This letter, which was as much, nay, more than I could expect, was anything but satisfactory to me, whose attachment to Harriet had so violently increased in consequence of the conviction of her devotion to me, which I had derived from her conduct in the morning, as very nearly to drive me to a final and formal abandon-

ment of my speculative scheme, and a declaration of my resolution to marry the dear girl, and live upon love. However, Nubley's mingled severity and incredulity, drove me into the other and more prudential course; and growing feverishly sick of the neighbourhood of the rectory, and the atmosphere of Chittagong Lodge, I availed myself of a vacant seat in the London mail, which passed close to the lodges of the park; and by eleven o'clock at night was rolling along the road to London, having taken an affectionate leave of my hospitable host and hostess, who concluded her lengthened farewell by wondering how I could run away from so pretty a girl, who was so desperately in love with me—an observation which procured her the epithet of “fool” from her husband, who squeezed my hand at parting, and told me I should hear from him the following day.

CHAPTER VI.

It generally happens, providentially, that at seasons when we are afflicted with griefs and sorrows, the very circumstances connected with them, compel us to exert ourselves in worldly matters, so that the inevitable excitement serves as a diversion from the sad subjects which would otherwise wholly engross and probably overcome us.

From the moment of my arrival in London, until the day when I should return to Chittagong Lodge, on my circuitous route to Portsmouth, to embark in the Honourable East India Company's ship, the *Ramchoondra*, every day and every hour of each day was parcelled out and

divided for the transaction of some business connected with my enterprise. During the night of my journey, I admit that my brain was maddened by the complexity of thoughts which were running through it ; but even then sleep came to my aid : emulating the heroes of Newgate and the Tower, who have been shaken out of a slumber to mount the scaffold, it was necessary for the guard, on our arrival at the White Horse Cellar, to nudge me not gently, in order to rouse me to a sense of my situation.

Tired nature, however, when refreshed, became obnoxious to all the “ills that flesh is heir to ;” and when I awoke, confused and astounded by the suddenness of the appeal, and found myself sitting at the corner of Berkeley Street, with a day beginning at a quarter after six before me, of which I was just conscious that I had but two or three available in England, I really felt bewildered—the tenderness and firmness of Harriet Wells had completely upset me — I did not expect such noble, charming conduct.

I would have given worlds, as I got out of the mail, to have got into the first morning coach downwards, renounced my design, and abandoned all my fine prospects, and acceded to her sweet, woman-like proposition, of living contented upon what we had.

How much do men sacrifice to the world!—how much do they yield to the opinions of others. I felt that if I now faltered in my resolution to go to my brother, Nublely would set me down for an idler—a waverer—in short, a vagabond; and Cuthbert's not very favourable impression received from Mrs. Pillman, would be strengthened and confirmed by the representations of my new friend; but Harriet, for whom, as I have already said, I before fancied I cared but little, had won me—fascinated—enchained me.

However, *I* had decided—so had Wells and his wife; and go *I* must—and go Harriet must *not*; and all I had to do was to live on in hopes and in love: for as to my affections taking the course which my dingy friend of Chittagong

Lodge predicted, it was absurd beyond belief. My heart could now know *no* change—and as Sheridan says—

“Least of all such change as they would give it;”

and, accordingly, I wiled away time till the world was “a foot,” and till my most active man had knocked up my landlady—indeed, being called at half-past six, in London, is enough to knock up anybody—and got things as comfortable as he could, and prepared breakfast; during which interval I dissipated my cares and shook off my sleep, by walking to Hyde Park Corner, and so down the Green Park and Constitution Hill, to my lodgings.

When I announced to the poor lady who kept the house my design of immediately starting for India, she endeavoured to dissuade me from so rash an undertaking, because a nephew of her's had been killed at Majorca; and my worthy and trusty servant, who never fancied I should really undertake such an astounding enterprise, joined in her entreaties to me to desist from

such a perilous undertaking, because his own brother's wife's sister's son had been drowned in a gale of wind in Chelsea Reach. These facts unnerved me as I sipped my tea at breakfast; but at ten o'clock "I was a man again!"—and, as my dear good friend, old Firkins, said of the hole in his inexpressibles, "I was surprised at my own presence of mind."

Well, to the city I went: to Broad Street, to the agents; to St. Mary Axe, to Favell and Bousfield's, took my old catalogue of slops, and fitted myself out. White jackets and calico shirts at per hundred; and, as Hull would have said, thousands of stockings and millions of neckcloths, all of which the worthy people promised should be packed up and packed off in the course of *that* forenoon, and in five hours more be stowed away on board of the Honourable Company's ship Ramchoondra, then lying off Gravesend, being to go round on the Tuesday morning to St. Helens, thence to begin her voyage, with a fresh departure.

Having thus expeditiously arranged this

affair, I went to the Jerusalem Coffee House—a place strangely combined in my fancy with artichokes and old clothes-men, and there saw my captain, who looked as much like a captain as he did like a coal-heaver. However, he was very civil—told me he had got Mr. Nubley's letter—that he had sent off to the ship to prepare me a comfortable berth—death to me!—and informed me that as the weather would be hot for a considerable time, he had selected one of the poop cabins for me, with a view of giving me plenty of air.

This particular mark of civility—not then understanding much of naval architecture—I did not exactly comprehend; but made a bow of gratitude for his kind intentions, the sincerity of which, however, I began to doubt, when he added, that the cabin he had so chosen was the “starboard booby-hutch.”

All this I subsequently discovered to be cant, or technicality, and found the cabin an extremely nice one, looking out on the quarter-deck, through jalousies, or blinds, and having a port on the

quarter,—in fact, one of the nicest residences for a single gentleman afloat that could be imagined. The captain, moreover, furnished me with a list of his passengers, which I read with much interest, in the hope that some one of them might have been somehow known to me before, but I was disappointed. There were in the list, a judge and his lady, a colonel commandant of a regiment, his wife and children, a chaplain, two captains, three lieutenants, two ensigns for the King's service, three writers, and four cadets for the Company; and then there were—Miss Hobkirk, two Misses Twigg, two Misses Scropps, Miss Amelia Scratchum, going to join her sister, Mrs. M'Itchem, Miss Louisa Spokes, and four Misses Warts. I had heard that the Company's ships were so well served that they were called floating taverns, but this *Ramchoondra* seemed to me more like a floating boarding-school.

The captain saw me smile at the list of ladies, and said, “ Now, Mr. Gurney, there is one thing which it will be as well to tell you at starting,—All

these young ladies are under my personal protection, and for their comfort and respectability I make such rules on board as I conceive right and proper. I do not permit the young men, during the passage, to walk on the same side of the deck with the young ladies while they are out taking their airings—of course I vary my regulations as I see fit; but I am sure you will not, under any circumstances, counteract my exertions for their advantage. You know I have full sovereign authority when we are afloat; any thing like insubordination—I care not in what quarter it arises—I put down with a strong hand. I have the power of inflicting personal restraint where there is an infraction of discipline. I can put my refractory passengers in irons, and have done it before now. I certainly do all I can to render that restraint as little irksome as possible, and have had my fetters covered with green baize; but I am not to be trifled with—the honour, virtue, and character of all these young ladies are com-

mitted to my care, and I *will* maintain them at the risk of my life."

I stared at him—the idea of the nature of the cargo, and of the responsibility, and the fetters, and all the rest of it—a cargo which no office in the world, I suppose, would venture to insure, startled me. I could say but little in reply to all his cautions. I felt that at least they were, as far as I was concerned, perfectly superfluous; so I shook hands with him, and departed from the Coffee House, he having acquainted me that he had no demand upon me for passage money, Mr. Nubley having informed him that my brother would settle that account upon our arrival at Calcutta, and having, moreover, impressed upon my mind the absolute necessity of being at Portsmouth on the following Thursday, at the latest, as the convoy were actually waiting the arrival of the two last ships from the river, one of which was the *Ramchoondra*.

When I left this worthy man, for so he really

and truly was, I found myself enlightened upon subjects entirely new to me. My abstract notions of a ship had previously combined something dirty, and pitch-smelling, and smoky below and wet above; and when I heard of etiquette, and distinction of sides, while the ladies were taking their walks, and all that attention to the rules of decorum, infinitely more rigid than the most rigid observers of propriety would require on shore, I was astonished. As for the girls, they might walk or not,—*my* heart was cased in steel, and my passions and feelings would live upon the recollection of my Harriet; that is to say, if when I saw her on my way back, her parents would not relent, or she decide. But then what time had we for preparation?—to be sure there might be some female Favells and Bousfields at Portsmouth, who would provide a lady's wardrobe as speedily as mine was prepared in London. But these were vain hopes. I knew her parents had made up their minds she should stay, and I was quite sure, under

these circumstances, their child would not make up her mind to go.

Well, the two days passed, and the third dawned, on which I was to quit the huge, foggy, smoky city, in which I had first drawn my breath, perhaps and in all probability, never to return to it. I called on Hull, he was in the country; I called at Daly's lodgings, in Duke Street; not only was he gone, but the shop was shut up over which he had lived. I dined at Dejex's—my last dinner; every thing as usual, but how changed to me. My eyes lingered on the rayed clock over the fire-place, 'which I had remembered from my days of boyhood: it seemed to me the type of my career—my sun was setting, as far as England was concerned; and I walked out of the coffee-house, and roamed about the streets looking at the moon—the moon which, when but a few days younger, I had gazed on with Harriet, but which now was ever and anon hidden by patches of black cloud, blown by a sharpish wind between us,—the brightness of

the one reminding me of past pleasures, and the fitful wildness of the other filling me with forebodings of the trials to come.

On the third morning after my arrival, I paid all my very small outstanding bills, and parted with my most excellent servant, whose devotion to me was sadly overbalanced by an aversion from the sea, and a dread of the voyage, which no representation of mine could possibly overcome. I regretted the separation, for he was an excellent fellow, and had been my servant ever since I was old enough to possess exclusively such a functionary. However, I might as well have endeavoured to persuade a cat to take the water, and therefore leaving him to die on dry land, I embarked in one of what we then fancied fast coaches, on my return to Mr. Nubley's, and on my way to Portsmouth—to that Portsmouth which had been the scene of my former jokes and jollities, but which henceforth was to be remembered as the last point of parting between me and all that I held dear.

There were three other passengers in the

stage, and, at any other time, I should have listened to their communications, and culled amusement from their absurdities ; but now, I had no time for these. My hours of travel were occupied in considering what course I should pursue with my reverend father-in-law elect. I would not for the world—I could not for the world, for I never was selfish—have persuaded Harriet to risk her life, and disobey her parents, by either insisting on her accompanying me, or of taking the strong measure of following me ; and yet, when I saw her, in the agonies of separation from me—and this I knew and felt I should see, without inculcating myself in a charge of vanity, after what I *had* already witnessed in her conduct towards me—what could I do?—how could I act ? I had pledged myself to Wells upon the point ; and, let the struggle be what it might, I resolved, please God, to redeem that pledge.

It has often been a question with me, whether our hours of happiness or sorrow fly the quicker. The doubt sounds odd ; but I have passed many

of both, and yet the doubt remains. I found myself at the turning to Chittagong Lodge long before I expected it, and a few minutes more brought me into the presence of that good, but most eccentric creature, its worthy master.

“Well,” said he, as little moved by my re-appearance in so short a time from my departure, as if I had only been into the next room,—“I have heard from your captain—all settled—eh?—good cabin—capital living—every attention paid you—more comfortable than ever you was in your life—wise thing you have done.”

“If it had not been done off hand,” said I, “it never would have been done at all;—if I am to take physic, I see no kind of advantage in standing smelling to it for an hour. Is Mrs. Nubley quite well, Sir?”

“Ugh,” said Nubley,—“well!—what should be the matter with her?—a constitution proved at Calcutta—she is as thin, and as dry as a Bombay duck.”

“And the Wellses, Sir?” said I.

“The Wellses,” said Nubley,—“oh! dear

me, I had quite forgot—I have got a letter for you from Miss Wells—eh—dear, where *did* I put it to?—I hope I hav’n’t burnt it—or sent it up to the agents in London by mistake—eh?”

“A letter, Sir,” said I; “why a letter?—I hope in less than half an hour to see her—to——”

“Poor devil! he’s done,” muttered Nubley. “You won’t see much of the Wellses here,” said he;—“they are gone—fled—you have put up the whole covey after winging your bird.”

“I do not comprehend you,” said I.

“Don’t you?” said Nubley, staring at me with the most unmeaning expression of countenance—“I wonder at that—they are gone to his sister’s, in the New Forest.”

“What can be the object of such an expedition?” said I.

“To get out of your way,” replied my friend, who had been all this time poking and rummaging amongst a heap of papers on his library table.—“Oh!—here’s the letter—that, I suppose, will explain all—I think Wells has acted like a sensible

man, and I hope you'll do the same"—“not that I think you will”—(in the sequel.)

I was too much affected by the intelligence of their departure, evidently caused, as Nubley said, by the desire of avoiding me, and by the receipt of the first letter I had ever received from Harriet, and which, from all I could see, promised to be the last and only one I ever should receive, to break its seal before a witness; I therefore quitted the library, and ran to my own room, where I tore open the envelope, and read these words:—

DEAR GILBERT,

I write this with the consent, and even at the desire, of my father and mother. They warmly and tenderly enter into our feelings; but, having decided upon this course, they have thought it better that we should not meet again—at least *before your voyage*. God will, I trust, give me strength and power to obey their commands, and forego the melancholy satisfaction of bidding you

a long, but, oh ! let me hope and pray, not a last, adieu.

That you should do that which is right and just, and what your best friends think ought to be done, is exactly what I wish and desire ; and, above all do I wish and desire it, because a failure, on your part, at the present moment, might be productive, in addition to mere worldly loss, of a disunion between you and your nearest and dearest relation. I own that I talked the language of my heart, when I urged your stay here upon a more moderate income, which I am sure, knowing myself, would afford us all the comforts of humble and domestic life ; but I have thought, I have taken counsel of my excellent parents, and I feel, that to urge this course upon you, or even to permit you to follow it for *my* sake, would be the height of selfishness. Could I ever be happy, my dear Gilbert, if I found myself hereafter the cause of your estrangement from your brother's affections ?—No ;—you shall see that I can make a sacrifice

of my feelings—of my happiness—to sincere affection, and a sense of duty. Follow my humble example ;—go,—be rich,—be happy, and continue to be beloved by him, whose affectionate anxiety for your welfare demands a willing obedience to his wishes.

I can scarcely write—but you will forgive me : remember, my stay in England is a sacrifice to duty—my going, my mother says, would break her heart. Can I, dare I, quit *her*, who for twenty years has watched over me, prayed for me, and taught me, not less by precept than example, to know the duties of my station, and to fulfil them to the best of my ability ? Dare I offend her—or even if I dare, for *your* sake, disobey injunctions which her tenderness and love of me have laid upon me—can I risk her happiness, perhaps her life, by persisting in my earnest wish to accompany you ?

I repeat my prayers, that I may be able to maintain the resolution to which I have come ; it is because I have made that resolution, that my father thinks our meeting again an event

to be avoided. It sounds cruel; but I know his heart, and am assured that his conduct is regulated by nothing but kindness. I think seeing you again, only to be separated, would break my heart. Now the blow *has* fallen, and you are lost to me; I live upon the memory of days that are past, and will live, dearest Gilbert, on the hopes of those which are yet to come.

Write to me, if I may encourage that feeling; bid me linger on through a life of seclusion, till your return; tell me that you do not doubt or mistrust my affection, because I have adopted the resolution I now announce to you. Return—return to me, and you shall find the heart that you have won as purely and entirely your own as it is at this minute. My poor head aches, and my eyes are sore with crying. If I were to write volumes, I could not say more—only be convinced of my truth—my sincerity—my love.

Yours, ever yours,

HARRIET.

Write before you sail, and send me some trifling remembrance—the plainer and simpler, the better; that which I have inclosed, you will perhaps sometimes look at; and do not fail to let us hear of you the moment you arrive. My father, mother—all—all of us, unite in prayers and good wishes. God bless you!

I had heard of the disinterestedness of women—of their self-devotion, their self-denial, and their total disregard of self; but living, as I did, not amongst the best, and having unfortunately heard strange histories of the *worst*, I was not prepared for this. I will not attempt to describe what I felt, and I suppose I need not say what I did: I wrote to her, and pledged myself to her eternally, thanking her a thousand times for her generous and affectionate conduct, and imploring her, for *my* sake, to calm her feelings, and look forward with faith and confidence, until, by the blessing of Providence, I should return and claim her hand, when I might be more worthy of such a treasure, and

when the unqualified approbation and sanction of her parents would render our union truly happy.

All this I said—but it was half hypocrisy—if that may be called hypocrisy which is merely a disguise of one's real sentiments with the best of motives. The dear girl had made a sacrifice, which it was not likely I should undervalue: I felt that I ought to reciprocate her noble feelings. If I had obeyed the impulse of my heart, I should have followed her to her retreat, and have implored her to abandon everything for me; and it was evident, by her own mistrust of herself, and her earnest appeal to Heaven for support in her good intentions, that such an expedition would have turned the scale in my favour; but reason, and honour, and justice, combined to point out to me the recklessness of such a course. To repay a tribute of self-devotion, by the exhibition of so much selfishness as would induce the obedient child to violate her filial duty; to estrange her from the home and hearts of her affectionate parents; to keep

them in a state of perpetual dread and apprehension of the fatal consequences of her residence in India, and perhaps expose the dear object of my devotion to the reality of the dangers they anticipated; no—the struggle was great: but I triumphed. My heart was bursting with grief and anxiety, but I sealed and despatched my grateful reply, and my apparently sincere entreaties for her to be calm and patient, and live on hope, at the very moment that her compliance with my expressed wishes would doom me to years of unhappiness, perhaps to eternal misery.

I sent her the pledge she kindly asked—that which she enclosed to me has never left my bosom from the day it first reached my hand.

Lucky, indeed, was it that time pressed—that everything connected with my voyage and departure was to be done in a hurry: all was action—not a moment was left for reflection—in two days the *Ramchoondra* was to be at St. Helens, if the wind permitted. The convoy, as I have already said, were waiting for the East

Indiamen ; and the commodore, with that ardent zeal and activity, so characteristic of the service of which he was an ornament, was one of a school not likely to bear delay with much complacency. It was therefore understood, that in twenty-four hours after the appearance of these vessels, every fore topsail in the fleet would be shaken out, and in less than twelve hours we should all be scudding before a delightful easterly wind—conceive an easterly wind being delightful—which had been blowing for ten days.

The whole of the forenoon after my arrival at Chittagong Lodge, on the preceding evening, was passed with my friend Mr. Nubley, who gave me charge of an infinity of account books, and papers of different sorts, all of which he methodically arranged in a green box, which he very carefully locked. In the sequel he forgot to send the key with it, which, as some of the papers it contained were to be delivered to a merchant at Madeira, was rather a drawback to my success as an accurate and

attentive agent. However, when the moment came for parting, I found the old gentleman all kindness and friendship, and admitting an April sort of sensation at parting,—of satisfaction at my decision,—joy for the advantages that awaited me, and regret at losing me,—all of which sentiments I had occasion to find satisfactorily authenticated by his frequent audible meditations during the last few hours of my stay.

Mrs. Nubley, who, during the thirty-six hours of my sojourn under their roof, had kept up a constant fire of jokes, after her fashion, touching the separation of lovers, and my cruelty, and all that sort of nonsense, which had nearly driven me mad, shook hands with me affectionately, and, I thought, put out her very thin white lips in a recipient position for a farewell salute.—Whether it was that I did not take the hint, or that she was still harping on Harriet, I do not know; but the very last words I heard her exclaim, as I released my

hand from her's, were "Lauk, Gilbert, you are such a man!—he, he, he, he!"

I had ordered the postchaise which was to convey me to Portsmouth, to wait at the inn till I came, and thither my portable luggage was conveyed.—It may be easily guessed why I did this; at least I think so. In my walk into the village, I should pass the Parsonage: was it likely I should go—perhaps, for ever—from the scene of my almost unconscious happiness, without—now that its purity and brightness had burst upon me—visiting it once more?

I stopped—I entered the house which I had heard ringing with innocent mirth, and honest cheerfulness. All was still: the faithful Martha, who opened the door, in the absence of the rest of the establishment, looked at me, and without a word from me, led the way to the dear breakfast-room where I last had seen my Harriet. She looked at my eyes—perhaps she saw tears standing in them—what then!—I am

not ashamed of them—they fell; and I threw myself into the chair in which I had last seen my beloved Harriet, and buried my face in my hands—when I raised my head I was alone.

That Martha, old and humble as she was, must, at some time of her life, have felt deeply, to have sympathized so readily, was quite clear.

Next to seeing the dear object of my love,—a love most serious and touching of all loves, because founded upon esteem and friendship, ripened into devotion by the merits and qualities of the beloved—that of again beholding around me the books in which we had read together—the harp near which I used to sit and hear her play—the desk still covered by the song which I had selected for her to sing—the thousand little accessories all around me, was most painfully interesting. I began to repent that I had again ventured into the paradise from which I had been driven; yet I believe it did me good—my feelings had their way

On the wall of the drawing-room hung a portrait of Harriet—it did not do her justice;

there were the features, but not the expression, not the softness, the gentleness, through which her mind beamed forth—yet it *was* a likeness. I had always abused it — always turned from it with anger, that the “cold, limner,” as Colman has it, could have made so unimpassioned a copy of such an original. It would now be worth worlds to me. I felt I had a right to it—I felt a jealousy lest any other man should even look on it, while I was away. I took it from the nail on which it hung—I kissed it a hundred times—I seemed to myself to have achieved something—I rang the bell of the drawing-room, and the aged Martha stood before me.

“Martha,” said I, “when the family return, say I took this.”

I showed her the picture.

“God send, Sir,” said she, “that you had taken the young lady herself, and all would have been well”—and the poor creature sobbed aloud.

Guineas were scarce with me in those days,

but as I pressed the old woman's hand, I left one on its palm, and hiding my treasure in the bosom of my waistcoat, quitted the Parsonage without another word !

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I was again in Portsmouth—drovè to the George. The sight of Portsmouth, too, under such totally different circumstances from those under which I had previously visited it, gave me a new pang. My first inquiry was, “Do you know if the Ramchoondra East Indiaman is arrived at St. Helen's, from the river?”

“Came to anchor about one o'clock to-day, Sir,” said the landlord; “several passengers in the house, Sir, who are going by her,—the captain has been here, Sir, and has ordered dinner for the party—what name shall I say, Sir?—he'll be too happy, Sir.”

“Party—dinner!”—thought I. “What! are the victims merry!—drunkenness before execution!—Gaiety—too happy to see me!” This was enough.—I told the landlord that I would

come back—left no name, and “knowing my Portsmouth,” as the phrase goes, I procured a barrow-man to wheel down everything but an anonymous *sac de nuit*, to the point, and there, according to Mr. Nubley’s directions, procured a good stiff wherry to take me and my light luggage to the Honourable Company’s Ship *Ranchoondra*, which instead of being at St. Helen’s, was comfortably bobbling herself about at Spithead, not more than a mile from the beach.

Then it was that I felt myself, with my two trunks, my dressing-case, my writing-desk, two or three odd boxes, the green box without the key, some supplementary parcels, and what elderly ladies in country towns call “odd-come-shorts,” really afloat. Then it was, that I was satisfied, not only that I had made up my mind to a voyage to India, but to what had appeared to me heretofore an affair of almost equal peril and difficulty—to climb up the side of a huge ship, with nothing to step upon but bits of sticks, fitter for cocks and hens to walk upon than men

and women—with nothing to hold on by, but a couple of bits of cord, handed to you, swinging from one side to the other, the chance being either that you did not catch them at all, or if you did, the first effect they produced would be to swing you off the infernal little ledges by which it is expected you are to mount.

I was just in the humour to care for nothing. It blew fresh, and just turning out by the battery, slap came a sea right over the bows of the boat, which made her shake, her gunwale being nearly under water to leeward, and I the recipient of more of the briny than I had ever seen detached from the main body, directly in my face, the little white horse having struck the bow, and made a ricochet over the heads of the boatmen into the stern-sheets. No matter; up we went, and down we came, until at last we reached the huge caravansary in which I was to be transported. Then came such a hollowing—"Boat alongside,"—"hand 'em a rope,"—such a washing and splashing between us and the ship; such poking, and fending, and squabbling, and boat-

hooking, which ended in "Now, Sir," to me,— I at the same time bobbing and stretching to catch two things like skipping-ropes, by the aid of which I was, as I had anticipated, to help myself up two pair of no-stairs into a thing as big as a church, which was rolling away from me whenever I tried to get footing.

However it was done. I broke my shin in stepping over the gangway, and my hat blew off the moment I touched the quarter-deck. Had it been a king's ship, I should have thought Nature had taken the trouble to teach me manners. However, after a hunt, in which several facetious and active personages joined, my hat was restored, and I was shown to the cuddy—a very handsome slip of a room, with fawn-coloured pannels and gold mouldings, from which opened upon the deck five windows, fitted with blinds; and on the left of its entrance was my cabin, which, as I have already said, was a very nice, convenient, agreeable lodgment. I found my chests and trunks, which had been deposited there till I gave directions which to stow away

below, with a weekly permission to my servant to have access to those which contained linen, &c., so that he might bring up the seven days' supply.

I was quite agreeably disappointed with the neatness and nicety of every thing I saw, and the extraordinary attention and civility of all the officers who spoke to me, in their different degrees. I was asked whether I preferred a cot or a standing bed-place.

“ Mine be a cot beside a hill,”

thought I; and then came visions of Harriet and honeysuckles ;—but the question puzzled me ; a cot I had heard of, but of a standing bed-place never ; and the term confounded me altogether. I did not like to display my ignorance. Did they mean, by a standing bed-place, a perpendicular bed ?—was I to sleep standing ? They saw I did not comprehend ; so they carried me into a cabin, where they pointed out a canvass-bag hung up upon two hooks, which they told me was Miss Anne Twigg's cot ; and then referred me to a

thing something like a dinner-tray, made of deal, in the corner, which they informed me was "Miss Fanny Twiggle's" standing bed-place.

I considered for a minute or two before I would decide upon this really important matter; and having made, even in smoothish water, several experiments as to getting into a cot, which is something like mounting a skittish horse, I resolved upon the standing bed-place, and was forthwith measured by the carpenter for a bed after the fashion of Miss Fanny Twiggle's dinner-tray.

During this discussion, nice as every thing seemed, I began to feel very odd. I was not conscious of any particular motion; but when I was in the cuddy, where for the next five or six months of my life I was to dine every day, the sight of three lamps suspended over the table, all hanging out of the right line, coming back to it, and then dangling the other way with a gentle inclination, made me wish, unless there was an absolute necessity for remaining on board, to get on shore as soon as possible. Altogether

I confess the prospect of the descent, viâ the skipping-ropes, made me linger on in hope that something—what I could not guess—would happen, which certainly never could, to diminish the relative distance between the deck of the ship and the boat. This, however, it was vain to expect; and so away I came—the side manned for me—and down I partly slid, and partly tumbled, and was hurried aft by one of my crew; affected to look pleased, took off my hat, made a bow, and came back to Portsmouth.

One thing I had entirely made up my mind to, which was, not to dine with the captain and his passengers—those I should see every day for the next half year; and the very notion of society, labouring under feelings such as those which occupied and oppressed me, was worse than death. I had now seen the ship, I had been on the poop, I had given orders for fitting up my booby-hutch; my luggage, except my bag and a few trifling articles which I could bring in the morning, were on board, and I secretly resolved not to return to the *George* until late in the

evening, so to escape the din and clatter of a large party.

I had a project for passing two or three hours much more in accordance with the present state of my mind. The excellent, the kind, the hospitable, friend, under whose roof I had passed so many happy hours, and whence I was journeying in the memorable time of the Prince's boots, had been suddenly and unexpectedly called from this sublunary world about a twelvemonth before the time of which I now speak. I felt that it would afford me a melancholy pleasure to visit those scenes of mirth in other days, and although his remains were buried some hundred miles thence, I could look upon the house, to me once a home of happiness, with a veneration and affection little inferior to those which the sight of his tomb itself would have awakened.

Accordingly I directed my boatmen to set me ashore on the Gosport side of the harbour—they obeyed of course—and paying them the amount of their demand for my trip, I proceeded along the High Street to the village in which stood

the well-known mansion, determining on my return to get whatever dinner I had, in Gosport, and cross the ferry, so as to reach the George at a time when the captain and his passengers had retired, if not to rest, at least from table.

I walked on, and every hedge and every tree reminded me of foregone pleasures,—and I believe the very diversion of my thoughts, melancholy as the diversion was, from my poor, kind, suffering Harriet did me good;—I cannot describe my feelings when I saw the house of my poor friend—its door, always before open at my approach, was sternly closed, and a sharp watchdog leaped to the top of the palings in front of it to bark at me. I love dogs—and I loved this dog for his watchfulness of his master's property—but I could not help feeling the change—I stood and looked at the windows as one would gaze on the features of an old acquaintance; I walked round towards the sea, and saw the billiard room, which seemed exactly as it was when I saw it last—but it had passed into other

hands—I felt glad that I had made the pilgrimage, and walked back towards Gosport.

I had no appetite—I wanted no dinner—but dinner is something that divides a day,—and certain it is that the six hours after dinner, be the dinner what it may, pass incredibly faster than the six hours before it,—I therefore resolved to go through the forms, and happening to return down the right-hand side of the street, I turned into the India Arms, kept by one worthy Mrs. Mullholland,—a name which, in cold weather, would, in a seaport town, tempt an anchorite;—I asked if I could have anything to eat,—I was answered, of course, in the affirmative—I directed it, whatever it might be, to be got ready in an hour, and continued my stroll.

A thousand times in my life I have found this to happen—I have thought of a person of whom I have not thought recently, and I have seen that person curiously soon afterwards. As I was strolling in a rather retired part of the neighbourhood of the town, pending the preparation of my meal, I fell to thinking of Daly,

regretting that I had had no time to seek him out during my short stay in London, and resolving to write him a letter before I crossed to Portsmouth. The thought had scarcely fled through my brain, when, if ever I saw him in my life, I saw Daly pop his head out of a window on the first floor of a small house close by the barracks. The instant he caught my eye he hastily drew back, but, in the following moment, he reappeared, and pointing downwards, with his finger, to the house door, shut the window and again vanished.

I thought it was a vision—however I stopped at the door, and, as soon as he could reach it, Daly himself opened it.

“Come in—come in;” said he, ‘make haste—come in.’”

I obeyed—and followed him up stairs into a small but neatly furnished drawing-room.

“What the deuce brings you here?” said he to me.

“I echo the question?” said I.

“Are you staying in the neighbourhood?” inquired Daly.

“Yes,” sighed I, “for one night; to-morrow I embark for India.”

And then commenced my narrative; which, as lovers love to talk of themselves, and that pretty lengthily too, I presume occupied some considerable space of time. It then became *my* turn to inquire.

“I,” said Daly, “am regularly done—the dividend we expected in Blinkinsop’s business is nil, and all I had of my own is gone.—Emma has returned to her mother, who is living with her Major in some part of Ireland; and I am going out with an appointment under government, if I can escape the devils of fellows who are after me.”

“I hope it is a good office you have got,” said I.

“Tolerable,” said Daly, “they have given me the Deputy Secretaryship at Sierra Leone.”

“Oh!” said I.

“I know what you mean,” said Daly, “but what could I do—it is a fine settlement for patronage; and if men succeed to death vacancies as they do in the army, I have a good chance. It is a sort of Tontine Colony, all for the benefit of survivors.”

“I am sure I sincerely wish you may have your health,” said I, “but are you really so hard up?”

“Hard up;” said Daly; “why, Sir, if I could not have raised a few guineas, I could not have got out. I borrowed three hundred pounds of an accommodating friend about three weeks ago, secured upon my salary—but when I came to have the money, I was forced to take seventy pounds in cash, pay sixty pounds interest, and receive the balance in paving stones and blankets.”

“You are joking,” said I.

“Joking! no;” said Daly, “those days are over, and so anxious was my friend to conclude the bargain, and deliver the goods, that when I came home the next evening, I found both my

rooms stuffed from carpet to ceiling with the Witneys, and a pile of the paving stones in front of my lodgings, looking like a full-sized model of one of the pyramids. I was threatened with prosecution by the surveyor of pavements—menaced with an action by my landlord for overloading his floors,—and so egad I was obliged to give another accommodating friend twenty pounds out of my seventy, to take my bargain off my hands.”

“But, my dear friend,” said I, “if you had insured your life.”

“I tried that, Gilbert,” said Daly, “but I am going to Sierra Leone.”

And he said this with a mingled grief and drollery, which gave me pain to hear. I turned the conversation, by begging him to come and dine with me at the India Arms.

“Me,” said Daly, “I dare not stir out—I am watched dodged—hunted—and my only chance is getting on board to night after dark in the disguise of a sailor. The vengeance of my few creditors is excited because they believe

that I was a party to the rascality of Blinkinsop ; while my wife, as you saw, on the other hand, attributes to our marriage the explosion of his affairs—so I am in a nice mess—and now, dear Gurney, do not think me inhospitable or unkind, or unmindful of other days—but—and I assure you I would have seen nobody on earth but yourself—leave me—you will be watched, and I shall be traced—my only chance is escape—and—no matter what—anything better than staying here.—You may depend upon it, (and perhaps these are the last words that we shall ever exchange) what has happened to me is justice—I say no more—make yourself happy—you have been saved from the embarrassments and entanglements into which I have fallen, and as to my conduct, I believe the sentence upon me by a just judge would be very much like that of the coroner’s jury upon the old woman, who stood still to be run over on a race-ground—“ It serves me right”—God bless you—and if we ever meet again, may it be in happier times to both of us.”

I saw that my presence kept him in a state of

nervous agitation, and of course did not hesitate to comply with his wishes, and withdraw. I cordially shook hands with him and we parted, and I walked down to mine inn, comparing in my mind the relative qualities of Emma Haines and Harriet Wells.

I confess my spirits had not acquired any great elevation in consequence of this interview. I had seen a fellow of infinite jest and talent doomed to certain death upon the pestiferous shores of a colony founded in fallacy, and sustained by hypocrisy, by deceit and misrepresentation.—I had seen him reduced to positive distress, duped and deluded by appearances, of which too I might and should myself have been the victim, if he had not, by conduct which I did not stop to examine, nor he attempt to justify, shifted the miseries from my shoulders on to his own.

When I reached the India Arms, the first exclamation I heard from a young damsel—Miss Mullholland I presume, was—“here is the gentleman”—the echo of which, like that of Kil-

larney, being “Well! his mackarel’s boiled to pieces”—both of which speeches induced me to believe that I had considerably overstaid my time, and kept the dinner waiting,—an offence to a cook, of whatever degree he or she may be, utterly unpardonable, and only to be equalled by that which the king of all kitchenmen took at the conduct of a noble marquess, who, when Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, ventured at his own dinner table, before company, to put salt into a soup which the *artiste* had made.

The frown of the fair hand-maiden was not rigid, and my little meal was served—for here there was no coffee-room—in the bay windowed drawing-room, which, from its size—the darkness of the weather, and the wetting I had got in the boat, appeared even at that time of year chilly.—I ventured to ask if I could have a fire lighted. Pinafore stared, and the waiter was called into council; it was however permitted, and although I heard myself designated as one of those “fire Indians” who never can be kept warm, I did not care for the obloquy, but felt comforted by the blaze.

I dined—I drank some wine—but it was all mere matter of course—my mind was full of thoughts, reflections, and contemplations—confused and wild—in short, I believe I was half-crazy—but in the midst of this madness, the last scene I had witnessed had made a strong impression upon me, and I felt that I had been remiss in not offering some assistance to poor Daly, which, even short as I was of cash, I might have afforded. I therefore resolved upon revisiting him now that it was dusk, in order to ascertain whether a few guineas, if he would do me the favour to borrow them, might be serviceable—I rang the bell, and paid my bill—but knowing that the orgies at Portsmouth were not likely to terminate for two or three hours, desired the waiter to keep up my fire, as I should return shortly and take tea—or—which I considered much more probable, some other refreshment.

I went to the house where I had seen Daly, but he was gone—I questioned the woman of the house strictly, but she assured me he had taken his departure for the ship; adding, that as she had seen me with him that afternoon, she

would not say so if it were not true—thus affording me a proof that she was a party to the necessity of his concealment from strangers. However, I had done for the best, and since going had been his object, I rejoiced that he was gone.

It had now set in to rain, and I began to doubt what I should do—however, during my cogitation, the rain fell so much faster that I was glad to return to the inn, where I intended to remain until the weather cleared before I ferried back, and accordingly re-entered the house, and ran up stairs to the room, which I considered my own domain, when lo! and behold, I found installed in *my* armed chair, by the side of the fire, which *I* had ordered to be kept up, a strange gentleman, coolly and quietly reading the newspaper, by the light of *my* candles—I thought everything in that apartment was, at least for the time, mine.

When I opened the door he looked up—and I drew back—on the point of flying into a desperate passion with the servants, for permitting

such an intrusion upon the sanctity of my territory; but I was instantly discovered by the gentleman himself, who, rising with some difficulty from his chair, said—

“I beg you a thousand pardons, Sir—I am an intruder here, but I trust you will forgive me—I am a sad invalid—I have just landed from a ship at Spithead—I felt very chilly and unwell; and this being the only room with a fire in it, the landlady ventured to show me into it—it is my fault, Sir—I hope you will excuse me—I am going on immediately to Southampton on my way to Bath, and will not intrude upon your kindness for any length of time.”

This gentlemanly explanation, delivered in a tone of particular sweetness, and with a gentleness of manner unusually prepossessing, extinguished all my youthful ire; and I replied, that I hoped he would remain as long as was agreeable to himself, and that I only rejoiced in having thought of having a fire, which he found so agreeable.

“Why, Sir,” said the stranger, “I have been

now four months on board ship—and the calm and quiet of this room, and the ease of this chair, are to me something I can scarcely describe to you—I have suffered much—and I thought I should be frozen, for I am chill'd and wet through.”

“Not a word, Sir,” said I—“Had you not better take something warm?” for I saw he looked wretchedly ill.

“No, Sir,” replied the stranger, “what you take to be bodily illness in me, is in a great degree to be attributed to mental ills. And,” said he, a faint smile playing over his melancholy countenance, “it is hard

“To minister to a mind diseased.”

“I have suffered seriously, Sir,—I have lost a fond and affectionate wife on the passage home—and if anything can aggravate such a misfortune, it is perhaps the circumstances under which my deprivation occurred—where the absence of even the most indifferent individual is so marked—where the vacant place which that individual

filled, daily and hourly recalls the calamity to mind—and where the loss of a beloved partner and friend is by every common-place event kept fixed in the mind and memory. It has been a great trial to me, Sir, as you may think, indeed, by my speaking of my sorrows to a stranger.”

“To nobody, Sir,” said I, “could you speak whose mind is more prepared to sympathize with you than mine.”

“Ah ! Sir,” continued the stranger, “I return to my country with blighted hopes and a shattered constitution ; I am now on a pilgrimage to the poor dear children, who, separated from their mother when almost infants, will scarcely know how to appreciate their loss—it is to see them, to bless them, and to tell them my sad story, that I have landed here instead of at Portsmouth, in order to proceed towards Bath, in the neighbourhood of which place they are living ; and I propose only to wait until my servant brings on shore such luggage as I may want for the journey. How-

ever, Sir, I ask your pardon for pressing my affairs upon you : I felt some apology was necessary for my intrusion. I have been casting my eye over the newspaper : you have no idea how strange, to a man who can have heard no intelligence from Europe for nine or ten months, the events of the day he arrives appear—those of whom we last heard in violent opposition to the government, are here recorded as constant attendants at court—and where honours descend, the occupation of the sons of judges, and of generals, and of admirals, who have succeeded, and bear the same titles, are vastly whimsical.”

I saw that my strange friend, who had prepossessed me in his favour very much, was anxious to appear in better spirits than he really was ; and, as I thought it better for him to encourage this disposition, I determined, if I could, to pick out a little information, as to whence he came, and, in fact, what he was.

“ I see,” continued he, “ but little alteration in this place, or, as far as external appearance goes, in Portsmouth. Walled towns are necessa-

rily restrained from enlargement; and, although alterations in detail may take place in the streets, the limits are set—the boundaries marked—so that, to the eye, from the sea, one cannot expect much change.”

From this time the gentleman conversed freely upon general topics—he seemed unwilling to speak of his own affairs; and whenever anything occurred which led that way, he appeared to me to avoid any farther observation with a kind of shudder at the recollection of his domestic misfortunes.

I inquired whether my having something “warm” would be disagreeable to him; on the contrary, at my suggestion, he agreed to have a glass of hot negus—an act which looked sociable, but one, however, which he did not perform without expressing much anxiety about his servant and his luggage, and an apprehension that he should not get to Southampton until very late.

As for my being on the eve of embarkation for India, he had not the slightest idea of it.

The people at the inn of course considered me only a casual visitor at Gosport; indeed, when they brought me my glass of punch, and my new friend his glass of negus, the waiter inquired whether I slept there, to which I replied, that I slept at Portsmouth.

I was glad to perceive, that the stranger appeared much refreshed by his beverage; and I ventured to suggest to him, as it was now past nine o'clock, and his luggage not yet arrived, that he had better remain at Gosport until the morning. This he objected to, but faintly, I thought, and inquired at what time I proposed to cross the water. I told him—punch is a wonderful opener of hearts—the fact, that I was to embark the next day for Calcutta, and that I was staying at Gosport, purposely to avoid the gaiety of a reunion of the passengers of the *Ramchoondra*.

“Is that your ship?” said the stranger; “I know her well—a very fine ship she is—and her captain a very excellent fellow. Are you going out as a civilian, Sir, or in the army?”

“Neither, Sir,” said I; “I am going out to join a merchant’s house in Calcutta.”

“Indeed!” said my companion; “and may I ask—” what he would have asked, I know not, for at that moment the waiter entered the room, and, in a stentorian voice, said, “Gentlemen, is either of your names Gurney?”

“Yes,” said I, jumping up, “mine is;” convinced it was an application from poor Daly.

“All your things is come ashore from the ship, Sir,” replied the man.

“My things come ashore!” exclaimed I, and turned to my companion, who astounded me, by saying—“There is some mistake, Sir, in this; *my* name is Gurney—they are my things, and I am very glad they *are* come.”

“But, Sir,” said I, “*my* name is Gurney too—you are coming home, I am going out—you want your things on shore, but I want mine on board.”

“*Your* name Gurney?” said my companion, rising from his seat.

“ Yes,” said I, and the blessed truth flashed upon my mind.

“ GILBERT !” exclaimed my companion.

“ CUTHBERT !” cried I; and the next moment we were in each other’s arms.

An attempt to describe my feelings at this moment would be useless. The whole thing appeared like a dream—like an event impossible—or, rather, like one of those *coups de Theatre*, well calculated to make an effect upon an audience, but which seldom occur in real life. The effect it did produce upon one solitary spectator, the waiter, was certainly “prodigious.” As to myself, the certainty of the fact, which, while my brother held me to his heart, could not be doubted, coupled with the extraordinary chain of circumstances by which the meeting had been brought about, perfectly bewildered me. If I had been desirous of cultivating an acquaintance with my fellow-passengers,—if I had not been desirous of visiting the scene of former pleasures,—in short, if I had returned from the ship and dined at Portsmouth, Cuthbert would

have been next day on his way to Bath, and I on mine to Bengal. What worked this happy change in my affairs?—the influence of my beloved Harriet. Sanctified to my recollections of that amiable girl, I could not permit the last day of my residence in the same land with her, to be profaned by idle revelry, or the commencement of new associations;—to her, and to solitude, I intended to devote the day,—and how was I repaid!

In one moment, all my plans and purposes were changed. Cuthbert, as he had already told me, was a widower; he became so six weeks after his marriage. It seems, that his lady had been forewarned, some years before the death of her former husband, of the danger to which she exposed herself by remaining in India. She persisted, and when she accepted Cuthbert as her second husband, her determination was, of course, to remain where she was. The medical men declared to Cuthbert the absolute necessity of her return to Europe; and this once being established, he resolved, *coute qui coute*, to

accompany her. The removal, as far as she was concerned, was too long procrastinated, and she died on the passage, between the Cape and St. Helena.

These were the facts. The feelings which they produced were, as I have already said, indescribable. The whole course of operation was changed. I intreated Cuthbert to remain where he was for the night; I proposed crossing immediately to Portsmouth, imparting the events of the evening to the captain, and then returning to my long lost brother; but Cuthbert, who, after the first burst of affection and surprise was over, felt very much exhausted, begged me not to think of coming back;—he would retire to rest, in a comfortable four-posted “standing bed-place,” at the India Arms, and endeavour to tranquillize himself for the exertion of the morrow;—that he would join me at Portsmouth in the morning, and that, instead of going, in the first instance, to the orphans, near Bath, we should together go to Nubley’s, where, as I had, in the shortest possible space of time,

informed him of every circumstance connected with my attachment and engagement to Harriet, we should remain, until we assembled together all parties interested,—“At which period,” said Cuthbert, “you, my dear Gilbert, shall feel that I can behave as a brother. I gave you up in India in despair—the business is now disposed of—but rely upon it you shall lose nothing by not having taken the voyage.”

It may be easily imagined, that I remained with my newly-restored nearest relation as long as I could; but I found that he required repose, and, accordingly, having satisfied him upon as many points as possible, I quitted him, nearly wild with joy, and bounded down the streets of Gosport towards the landing-place, stamping my feet upon the pavement, and thinking as loudly as ever did Nubley himself—Is it to be wondered at?—could I help it?—I wonder I did not go mad.

When I had embarked the ferry-boat seemed to linger,—the man pulled, but not half so well as usual. I leant forward, and pushed forward,

as if I fancied the ardour of impatient anxiety would propel the little bark. At last, we reached the Hard, and away I scampered, rather than ran, through the well-known gates, into High Street, and, in less than ten minutes, found myself at the George. The Ramchoondra party had just finished their tea, and the captain was going on board. Poor devils ! thought I,—what pitching and bobbing out to Spithead in this dark night, after a merry day's dinner on shore.

“Why, Mr. Gurney,” said the captain, as I came up to him, “I expected you to dine with me ; all my passengers, except yourself and one other, have done me that pleasure. All that sail in the same boat ought to know each other ashore.”

“Yes,” said I, holding my breath, and endeavouring to show the greatest composure,—“but—but—I—I—am not going to sail in the same boat with them.”

“What, Sir !” exclaimed the captain,—“all your things are on board. I'm off to-morrow at noon—orders just come.”

“So is my brother Cuthbert,” said I, “and I have no need of making the voyage, whatever forfeit is to be paid.”

“Forfeit !” said the free-hearted schipper ; “there shall be no forfeit. If Mr. Cuthbert Gurney is arrived, I shall be too happy to see him before I start ; and, as I do not think you ever much relished the trip, Mr. Gilbert, however sorry I am to lose your company, I am heartily glad you are reprieved.”

“Thank you,” said I, “and assure yourself, if anything could have moderated the evil which I considered the voyage to be, it would have been sailing with you.”

“Well, but,” said the captain, “what shall we do about your kit?”

This bit of solicitude, not being a dancing-master, I did not quite comprehend. He saw I did not.

“Your traps, I mean ?” said he.

This, not being in the rat-taking line, I was equally at a loss to understand.

“Your sea stock, and chests, and all that?”

continued my excellent friend, "they must be returned—you won't want them—the slop-sellers will take them back at a trifling loss."

"Oh," said I, "never mind."

"Aye, aye, Mr. Gurney," said the captain, "but we must mind,—the man who keeps on never minding, however well that may be when grief is in the question, will never do business,—they must be re-landed; it shall be done the first thing in the morning; there is a lighter coming off with my last live stock and vegetables, which shall bring them on shore for you, and I'll take care all shall be right. I am deuced sorry to lose you, and if I *can* possibly manage it, I will make a point of seeing your most worthy brother to-morrow, to whom present my best regards. And so, Sir—give me your hand—and good night; and all I can say is,—I say it from the bottom of my heart,—I wish you all health and happiness ashore, without the trouble of risking the one in search of the other."

So departed my captain—and what did I do?—I really do not recollect—I was too happy

to enjoy my happiness, and too anxious for its full development, to endure the process of waiting till two or three o'clock the next day, when the *dénouement* should arrive. I went to bed, but I slept not; I heard the various passengers of the H. C. S. Ramchoondra paddling to their bed-rooms, the last night they were to sleep on shore; and I thought to myself thought I, "this time to-morrow, when you are wobbling and squabbling in your floating seminary, I shall be domesticated with the long lost brother of my heart, and, perhaps, with the affianced wife of my bosom."

As soon as it was light I was up: there I saw trucks, and barrows, and bonnet-boxes, and band-boxes, and hairy trunks, and red leather trunks, and deal chests, containing all the trifling extras, which the ladies of the Ramchoondra party had recollected after everything in the world had been packed up. And there were the third mate, and the second mate, and the ladies themselves, all going down High Street; and then I saw three huge barrow-loads of my

things coming up High Street, all brought ashore “per lighter,” and presently found them piled up in the hall of the inn, with a note from the captain, saying that he did not think he could leave his ship again,—that the Commodore had been “blazing away,” and “sporting his bunting,” at a deuce of a rate,—all of which was Hebrew to me then,—reiterating his good wishes for my welfare, and enclosing me the first of a set of bills I had drawn upon Cuthbert for my passage-money, with an order to the agent in Broad Street to give me up “second and third same tenour and date, unpaid.”

Sudden joy, like sudden sorrow, seems, at first, like a dream; and as I looked at all these matters and proceedings, I almost feared that what had so recently and rapidly occurred was a vision; but when I saw my excellent brother himself walking up High Street, he also followed by barrow-loads of bags and baskets, and small trunks, and large trunks, and all sorts of odd-shaped cases, containing every variety of oriental luxury and comfort; I began to feel convinced of

the reality of my adventure : I hurried to meet him—offered him my arm—and felt what it was to feel the pressure of the hand of the only living being upon earth who, by the ties of blood, could care for me.

This was, perhaps, the happiest moment of my life—of what frail tenure happiness is!—I was delighted to find Cuthbert apparently so much better in health, than he seemed to be the preceding evening, and, although he had taken some early breakfast at Gosport, he joined me in a later *déjeuner* at the George : he had, of course, no object in staying at Portsmouth : I merely was trying to know what could be done with my “Kit,” or my “Traps,” or whatever the phrases were, and which I imagined might be transported to London by the waggon ; but, with regard to Cuthbert’s “things,” which seemed to me nearly to equal the whole of my stock for the voyage, I was considerably puzzled, when I found that all the oil-skin covered baskets, and high boxes, and low boxes, and brown bags, and white bags, which were attended by two or

three native servants, contained nothing in the world but what he wanted every day of his life.

The servant who appeared to be absolutely essential to his existence, looked to me like two yards of white muslin rolled up, with a yellow top—he called him Rumagee,—then there was a fellow whom he called Buxoo, and two other miserable pieces of trash and tiffany, who filled the offices of Dobie and Dirgie; all of whom he really thought he could not do without. I did not like to presume upon so early a restoration to his acquaintance, but I ventured to suggest that one good English servant would do more, and do it better, in England, than all these frail pieces of rice-eating humanity; and that as the Ramchoondra was still at anchor, and I had heard the Captain most anxiously inquiring of the landlord if he knew of any native servants wanting to return, I suggested the dismissal, at one *coup*, of these poor helpless wretches, who, in this country, are only useful in making

fun for the little boys in the streets through which they happen to pass.

Having, by a parity of reasoning, persuaded my excellent brother to compress his luggage into one or two English trunks, discarding all the loose basket-work of the East, I, at about twelve o'clock—(I found him entirely imbued with the proverbial indolence of long residence in India)—got him into a comfortable travelling chaise,—not, indeed, quite so splendid as that in which, under other circumstances, I had left the Crown some years before,—and was waiting at the door to put the finishing-stroke to our departure, when who should I see rolling up to me as fast as he could, but my most excellent friend Tom Hull. I started with surprise ! but I was delighted to see him ; especially as I was certain I could tell him something he could not “happen to know.”

“ My dear Gurney,” said Hull, “ I am glad to see you looking so well and so happy. Well—I have been there—come from the Isle

of Wight—sea mountains high—give you my word never beheld such a scene in my life—never mind—saw the Ramchoondra yesterday afternoon—went on board—extremely civil people—show'd me your cabin—splendid apartment!—eh? you dog.”

“Splendid!” said I; “my dear fellow—what, fifteen feet six, by six feet eleven!”

“Oh!” said Hull, in a sort of grunt; “I don't mean as to size—but comfort—eh!—saw your stock—thousands of shirts—never saw anything like it—eh!—Favell and Bousfield—known 'em this thirty years—capital mat on the floor—eh!—chest of drawers—pooh, pooh!”

“Yes,” said I; “but I am not going, my fine fellow.”

“Pooh! pooh! don't tell me!” said Hull; “you *are* going—why all that preparation—eh?—you can't do better—‘the ball at your foot’—eh! none of your nonsense!”

“Yes,” said I; “but nevertheless look!—here are all the things you saw in my cabin yester-

day—all re-landed and standing in the hall—what do you say to that?”

“That!” said Hull; “what I always said—I said you *never* would go—knew it—told Daly so—won’t suit him—don’t care for money—what’s money to you—glad of it, eh!—but I must not stop—hear the horn—got a place on the box—here comes the coach—you know the coachman!”

“Not I!” said I.

“You do!” said Hull; “met him at my house at Mitcham—Tom Burr—excellent fellow—smashed—obliged to take to that—don’t you remember Mrs. B.—you and Daly and Tim—eh, you dog? pooh, pooh!—don’t tell me!—*I* happen to know—always go by him, Sir—good bye—God bless you—delighted to know you are not going.—”

And so away hurried my worthy friend, and tumbling up on to the coach-box, whirr went the horn, and away went the coach.

“Bless my soul,” said Cuthbert, “what spirits he has, and how well he looks!”

“Who?” said I.

“Little Hull,” said my brother.

“What!” said I, “do *you* happen to know Hull?”

“Know him?” said Cuthbert; “I have not seen him now for eight and thirty years, but he isn’t in the slightest degree altered during that period—not in the least.”

“How strange that you should recollect him,” said I.

“Recollect him!” replied my brother; “not at all strange. Why, he was the man who set up our father’s schoolmaster in business, out of pure regard to his parents, with whom he was personally acquainted.”

Hull, thought I, is not only omniscient, but eternal;—but I could think no more of him, or any thing else disconnected from self. Packed up at length in our little travelling carriage; all the Indians dismissed, save one, who at my suggestion covered his native trumpery with a shaggy great-coat, which I had bought the day before, previous to my embarkation from Gosport, away we rattled for Chittagong Lodge. Every mo-

ment I was with Cuthbert convinced me more and more of the excellence of his heart and the warmth of his fraternal feelings. I lost no time in vindicating myself from Mrs. Pillman's calumnies, and exerted myself to the utmost in prepossessing him with the charms and attractions of Miss Wells; and even went the length (which to a brother, under the circumstances, was no breach of confidence) of showing him the dear, kind, and generous letter which she had written to me. He appeared duly to appreciate her merits; and having avowed himself anxious that I should speedily "marry and settle," so as to afford him a "family home,"—these were his own words—I had little doubt that when he saw the dear girl he would be too happy to sanction, in the most unqualified manner, my union with the only being I now felt could make me happy.

I will not occupy my pages with the account of our arrival at Chittagong Lodge, nor by a description of the warmth with which we were received by our excellent host and his fair lady. Neither will I throw a damp over the joy which

I believe we all felt at my brother's arrival, by any further allusion to the melancholy event which brought him to England alone. It was quite evident, by Mr. Nubley's drone and Mrs. Nubley's occasional titterings, that others beside ourselves were deeply interested in my return to the village; and I mightily rejoiced when I was sitting, as composedly as I could sit, talking congenial nonsense to the lady of the house, who was employed netting, or knitting, or knotting—I do not know which—a new worsted comforter for her better half, to hear Nubley, partly in conversation with Cuthbert, and partly in audible cogitation, corroborate every thing I had said to Harriet's advantage. The reason for this was clear. Nubley always liked and admired Harriet; but while I was poor, and she had nothing, he objected to the match. Now, it was quite another matter; and when we parted for our respective bed-rooms, I having first despatched a letter to Mr. Wells, announcing what had happened, and entreating him and his family to return forthwith, I believe we were, bating my

poor brother's grief for the loss of his wife, as happy a party as ever slept under the same roof.

Between ourselves, I began to suspect that Cuthbert had discovered some of those traits of character in the lady of his choice to which Mrs. Nubley had before alluded; because, although he certainly was labouring under dreadful depression when I first so fortunately encountered him at Gosport, his spirits, since he had found consolation in the affection and society of a brother, had wonderfully mended; and moreover he changed his plan of proceeding post haste to visit the two Miss Falwassers and Master Adolphus Falwasser, at their respective schools; and contented himself by writing letters to the mistress of one and the master of the other, informing them of the never-to-be-sufficiently-lamented death of their exemplary parent, and desiring that they might be put into the deepest possible mourning; adding in a postscript that he would go to them the very first moment he was able—his appearance as their father-in-law being the

first intimation of the double event of the mother's second marriage and decease.

Oh ! how I watched and waited during the morning of the next day for the welcome sound of Wells's voice—who, too happy in securing the happiness of his child and myself, would come rolling himself into the hall of Chittagong Lodge, ready to seize me by both hands, and congratulate me upon the happy and unexpected change in my affairs ; but no—ten o'clock came—no Wells—half-past ten—I could not bear the suspense : I walked down to the parsonage ; there was my poor, dear, kind old woman ;—she had heard that I was come back—heard of Cuthbert's arrival ;—she shed tears when she saw me.—I went into the drawing-room, and sllily hung up Harriet's picture in the place whence I took it. I thought I should be called simpleton by Wells, or Mrs. Wells, or perhaps laughed at by that plump, little, bright-eyed thing, Bessy, who was quite as wise in her generation as she ought to be—and then, as there was no news there, I walked back again. My suspense,

however, did not last long, for in about half an hour a lout on horseback, who ought to have been with us at least two hours before, brought me a note from Mrs. Wells. These were its contents :

“ What has happened, God knows !—we have lost Harriet—she is gone—whither we know not—her father is in pursuit of her. Under any other circumstances I should rejoice beyond measure in the news your letter conveys—at all events, I shall be at the Rectory this afternoon, where Mr. Wells is either to send or come to us. Harriet quitted this place, we suppose, in the middle of the night before last. I send you enclosed the note she left.

“ Yours, in the deepest distress,

“ A. WELLS.”

I was thunderstruck !—What did it mean—was I again deceived—was Harriet too, faithless?—no, no, that could not be. With a trembling hand I opened the note which was enclosed—and read what follows :

BELOVED PARENTS,

I have struggled in vain—I have prayed in vain—I have fallen, and have only to implore your forgiveness—I have taught Gilbert to believe I love him—you have permitted, sanctioned the attachment; nay, you have yourselves pledged us to each other—I cannot permit him to go from me to encounter dangers and difficulties, and shrink from them myself. I am weak—I am bewildered; but if I am to act towards him as he is acting towards others, and do my duty—at least that which is implied by our engagement, I ought to risk all. Assure yourself, my beloved mother, that no harm will befall me. A thousand, thousand thanks and blessings for your kindness and affection. I write incoherently—but I feel I must be the partner of his voyage. For all the difficulties and inconveniences I am prepared; I know enough of woman's sympathy, to be assured, that these will be soothed and assuaged, if once they know my story in the ship in which we

shall sail. Oh ! on my knees I implore your pardon, best of fathers, dearest of mothers. If *you* will forgive me, God will, for I am actuated only by a sense of duty. Do not, do not follow me. I take Frances with me ; she will know how to manage our little journey. Owing to your kindness, I have money sufficient for all expenses. Once more, farewell ! and one more prayer for forgiveness. If you should follow me, I hope, before you can reach me, to be on the wide, wide sea, that I once so much dreaded. Kiss my dear sisters for me, and do not blame me, at least to them.

Ever, ever yours,

HARRIET.

This nearly drove me mad ; but in the midst of the excitement, may I honestly aver, it gave me the sincerest pleasure. I knew she must be safe : the year eighteen hundred and eleven was not the age of romance ; nor were the roads from Lymington to Portsmouth infested with wolves or robbers. And if anything could seal the

bond of union between us, it was the result of the struggle of a pious, well-regulated mind, with a passion founded upon friendship and esteem, sanctioned by parental authority. Here was no irregularity of feeling, no wildness of thought, no wantonness of imagination : she felt herself pledged—and she loved. From a miserable wretch, there never was so happy a dog as I.

Differently, however, did circumstances turn out. As soon as possible after Wells discovered the flight of his daughter, and long before Mrs. Wells could write to me, he pursued her to Portsmouth. He could hear no tidings of her, as, indeed, it would have been strange if he could; but he proceeded at once to the Point, where he inquired if the ship *Ranchoondra* had sailed. “Yes,” was the answer; “she is gone, Sir, with the rest on ’em, at last.”

“Then,” said Wells, “all is over; my girl is lost to me.”

“What, Sir,” said another man, who was

standing by, "did you want to send anything by her?"

"No," said Wells, "not I."

"Well," said the man, "it's droll enough—that ship seems to have something queer about her—do you recollect that young lady as was down here before it was light asking after her?"

"Young lady?" said Wells. "What do you mean by a young lady?"

"Why, what do I mean?" replied the fellow, who did not very much approve the sharp tone of the question, "I mean a very nice young lady, with another very pretty girl, which, as I takes it, was her maid; and she comed down and asked for the Ramchoondra."

"And did she reach it?" said Wells.

"Reach it!" said the man, "you might as well have tried to scratch the moon's face with a toasting-fork—Lord love ye; she was hull down afore five o'clock."

"Do you happen to know where that young lady is?" said Wells.

“ I can’t say as how I does,” replied the man.

“ I think,” said another, “ as how she went to the Postesses”—(subaudi blue).

“ Perhaps then she is still safe !” said Wells.

“ Oh ! no doubt of that, Sir,” said the oldest of the boatmen, “ it’s a wery respectable house.”

Conceive the state of the anxious father, shivering with cold and anguish—his fair, delicate child, too tender to look at the moon with me in a flower-garden well shaded with laurels, to have been exposed to the pitiless pelting of a night storm, and afterward driven to the shelter of the Blue Posts at Portsmouth.

No matter—such was the truth. Frances, the maid—the monitor—the companion of the flight, and not improbably the furnisher of great part of the means, had recommended repose to her mistress. With her, who loved her, and had lived with her from a child, she was secure : but the agitation was great ; and when later in the morning her father, who had not disturbed the

rest which he found, by the description of her person and companion, she was taking, at the Inn in question, it increased tenfold.

Judge, then, what it was, when, restored to the arms of her fond father, and returned to her paternal roof, the truth was gradually imparted to her—that although the ship had sailed, all that she treasured was yet on shore, and near her—that everything was smooth and settled—and that happiness, unclouded and unmitigated, awaited her. The effect was tremendous : the announcement, carefully and gradually made, burst upon her like a thunderbolt. I ought not to write this, because I was the cause and object ; but, it is true. A revulsion took place in her whole constitution ; and that delicacy of temperament which had irrevocably decided her mother against her voyage to India exhibited itself in a prostration the most tremendous and appalling.

My state of mind may easily be conceived. There she was at the rectory, conscious of my being close at hand, the medical men strictly

prohibiting an interview. She sank—and sank—and many were the days in which I stole to the door of her room, and sat still upon the stairs to catch the sound of her voice—even a moan, or a sigh was music to my ears—until my heart utterly failed me; the doctors gave me no hope—and yet I could not despair: I still watched and still prayed—and GOD was good—she recovered, and WE WERE MARRIED.

Having brought Mr. Gurney to the most important epoch of his life, the Editor terminates his task, at least for the present; but, as Mr. Gurney's after career was a busy one, and there is still remaining a considerable mass of his papers unpublished, it is not impossible that the Editor may submit another portion, at some future period.

THE END.

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